ピアノの森

一色まこと

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ピアノの森 21

一色まこと

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The Perfect World of KAI

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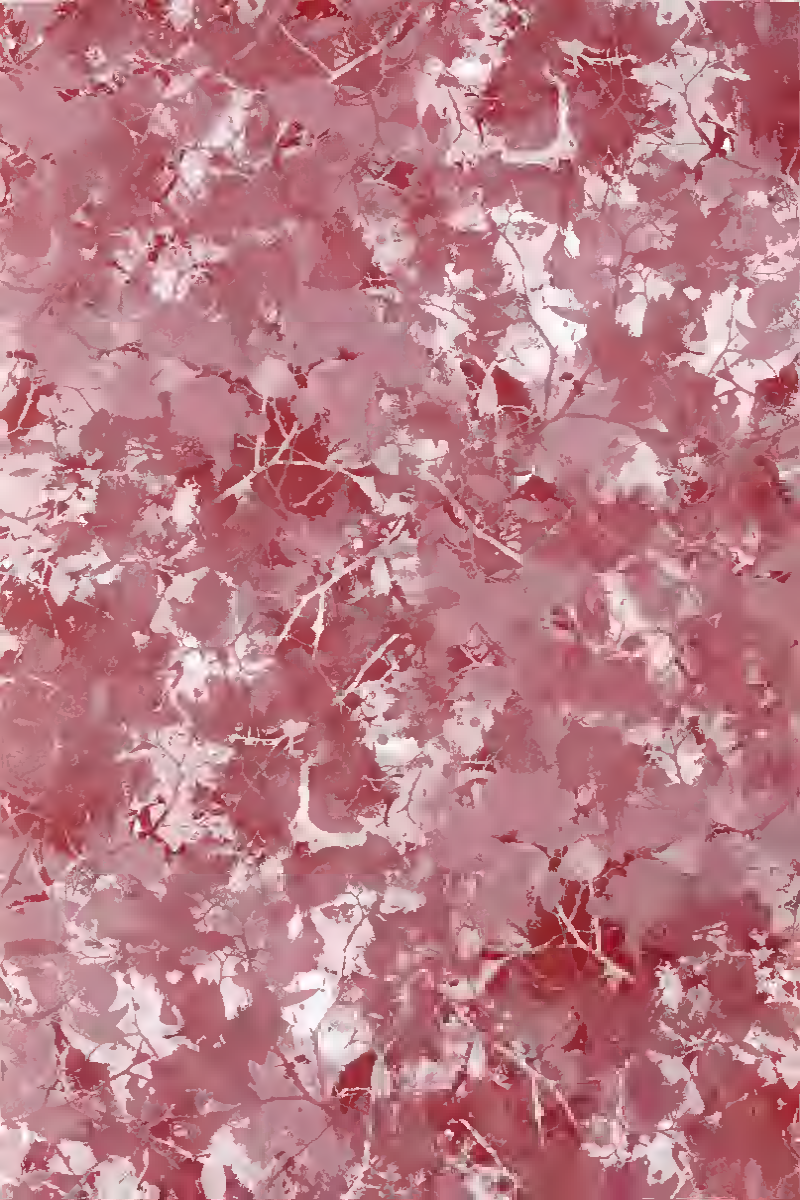

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ISSHIKI Makoto

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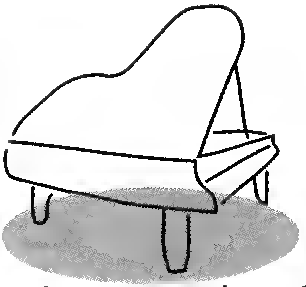

The Perfect World of KAI

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THIS IS A WORK OF FICTION.
ANY RESEMBLANCE TO ACTUAL PEOPLE, ORGANIZATIONS, AND/OR EVENTS IS PURELY COINCIDENTAL.

Chapter 187

For Your No.1

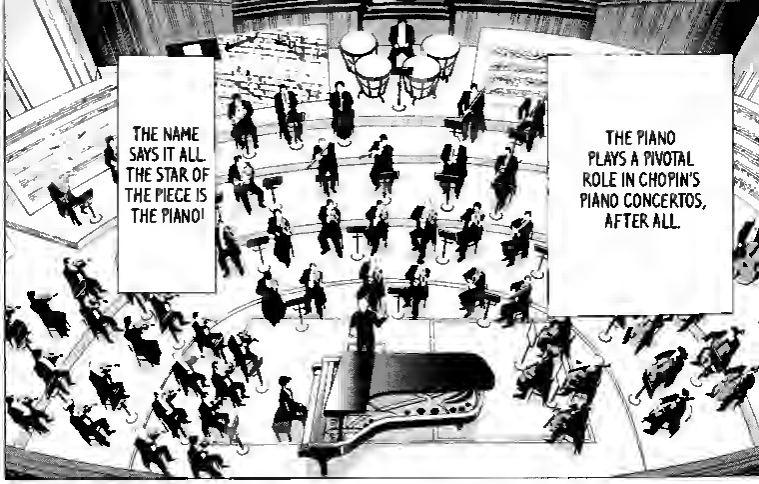
CHOPIN ONLY EVER COMPOSED TWO PIANO CONCERTOS.
FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN (1810-1849)

BETTER KNOWN SIMPLY AS NO.1 AND NO.2
NAMELY, NO.1 IN E MINOR, OPUS 11, AND NO.2 IN F MINOR, OPUS 21.

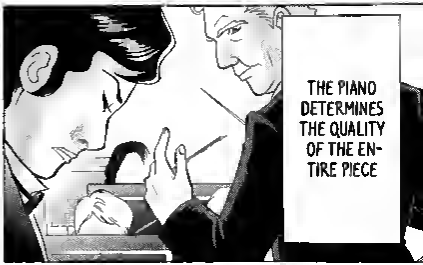
THE VAST MAJORITY OF CONTESTANTS WOULD OPT FOR THE GRAND AND DAZZLING NO.1.
THEY PRESENT THE FINAL CHALLENGE IN THE CHOPIN COMPETITION.
AND SATORU MUKAI FROM JAPAN
OLESHA YUSHCHENKO FROM UKRAINE,
WEI PANG FROM CHINA,
AND SURE ENOUGH, OUT OF THE TWELVE FINALISTS THIS TIME, ONLY THREE ARE GOING FOR NO.2
Flip
Flip

I'M ALSO VERY FOND OF THE ORCHESTRA SOLO IN THE BEGINNING
IT CAPTURES THE HEART FROM THE VERY FIRST THEME OF THE INTRODUCTION.
BUT PERSONALLY, I STILL HAVE A PREDILECTION FOR NO.1 BECAUSE THERE'S A NICE RING TO IT.
CONNOISSEURS OF CLASSICAL MUSIC GENERALLY FAVOR NO.2
THE ENTIRE SECTION, PLAYED ONLY BY THE ORCHESTRA, LASTS FOR AROUND FOUR MINUTES.
UNTIL THE PIANO JOINS IN...

WHAT GOES THROUGH THE CONTESTANTS' MIND FOR THE DURATION?
ARE THEY ANXIOUS? NERVOUS?
THE MOMENT THE PIANO SOLO BEGINS...
NO IF POSSIBLE, I HOPE THEY ARE BREATHLESSLY ANTICIPATING...
THE MOMENT THEY CAN DIVE AMIDST THE SWEEPING MUSIC...
SILENTLY AND IMPATIENTLY AWAITING...


THE NAME SAYS IT ALL. THE STAR OF THE PIECE IS THE PIANO!
THE PIANO PLAYS A PIVOTAL ROLE IN CHOPIN'S PIANO CONCERTOS, AFTER ALL.

AND THAT DECISIVE MOMENT WILL SOON BE...


THE PIANO DETERMINES THE QUALITY OF THE ENTIRE PIECE

HERE.

OUT-
STANDING
PIANISTS
ARE AWARE
OF THE
DEFINITIVE
MOMENT...
Kawai
Ahh...
Amazing
AS ITS
ARRIVAL WILL
STIR THEM
IMMENSELY
Ahh
IS CERTAINLY
ONE OF THESE
OUTSTANDING
PIANISTS
AUBREY THEISS...

I CAN HARDLY BELIEVE I'M ACTUALLY HERE, WATCHING THE CONTESTANTS AND THE WARSAW PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA PLAYING WITH THEIR VERY HEART AND SOUL.
THERE ARE SIMPLY NO WORDS TO DESCRIBE THE JOY OF LISTENING TO NO.1 HERE IN WARSAW!

THAT ICHINOSE KAI WILL PLAY.
AND MY WHOLE BEING IS BUZZING WITH ANTICIPATION FOR THE NO.1.

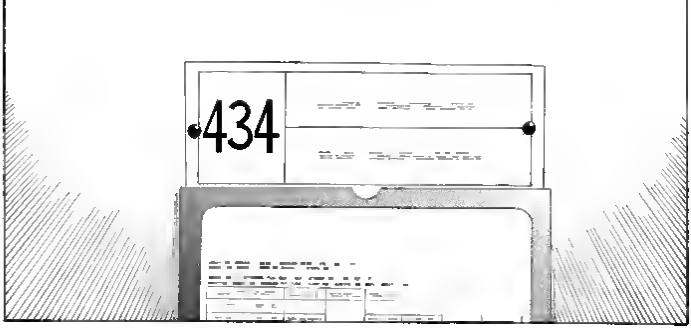
Ichinose...
NINE MORE CONTESTANTS... THREE MORE DAYS TILL ICHINOSE
THE MERE THOUGHT OF LISTENING TO ICHINOSE'S NO 1 TAKES MY BREATH AWAY
Ichinose!
MUZYCZNY FRYDERYKA CHOPINA

T/N: CALM DOWN DUDE WE GET IT PROBABLY JUST KISS HIM AND GET IT OVER WITH

Show me
the best No.1
you can play!!
.....

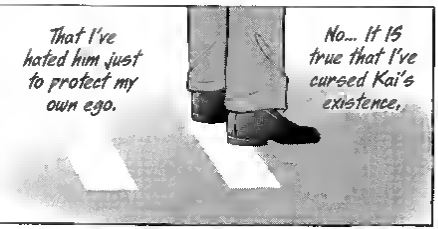
What should I do?!
UNI WERSYTET MUZYCZN
Kai.
To help you get into top form for your performance on stage...
I...
Are there any available rooms? Whichever will do...
Are there...

Bingo!
434
Kai
434.
This is where most contestants practice.
Put down your name here!
If Kai is here...
I just wanted to find out where Kai is...
I booked the room next to his without thinking.
Excuse me... Is Room 435 available?
435


434

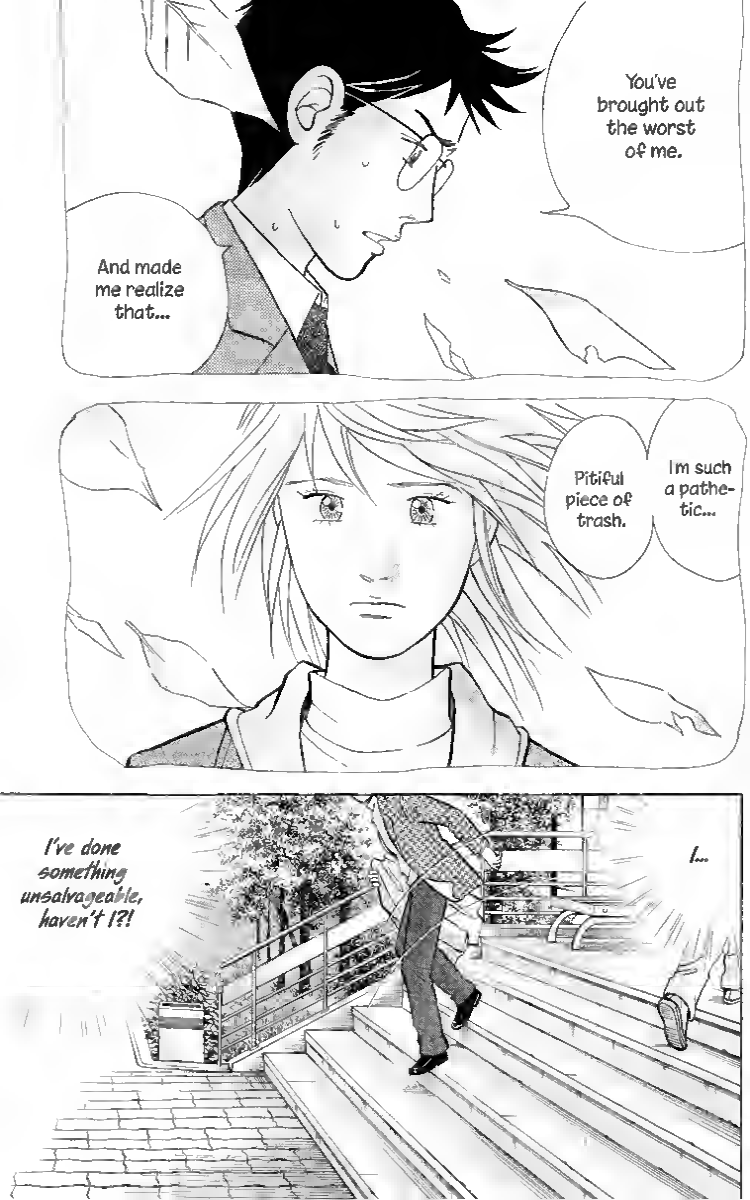
"I just blurted that out. I didn't mean any of it!" Like that?
But how?

Even though I can't take back what I've said...
I have to apologize...


That I've hated him just to protect my own ego.
No... It IS true that I've cursed Kai's existence,

Especially not when his performance is fast approaching...
But I shouldn't have told him any of that.

I hate you.
I've hated you ever since elementary school.
I have always hated you...
The timing was simply too terrible.


You've brought out the worst of me.
And made me realize that...
I'm such a pathetic...
Pitiful piece of trash.
I've done something unsalvageable, haven't I?!
I...

What I said didn't mean much to Kai.
But...
Just maybe...
That's right!
Kai has always been jolly...
And surprisingly dense...
Who...
Who am I...
Even kidding?!

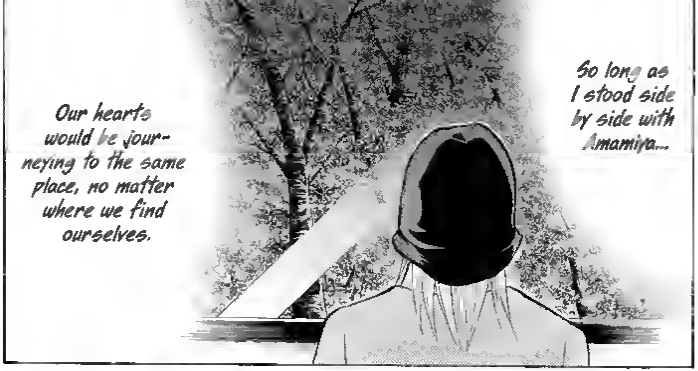
I actually...
Hurt you...
At such a critical moment for you!!
434

Thinking long and hard...
I've been...
About Amamiya.
It never bothered me.
I was used to being hated.
Ever since I was a kid...

new friend
Come to think of it, ever since I met Amamiya...
I've become stronger.
My goal is to become a pianist!
Even though a lot has happened since then...
I've become stronger that ever!

It remains true that Amamiya was my first companion.

No matter where I was...
Even when he's not with me...
I would feel energized.
Whenever I told myself...
That Amamiya must be charging on with the piano...
This could go on forever.
I believed that so long as I could play the piano when I grew up...


Our hearts would be journeying to the same place, no matter where we find ourselves.
So long as I stood side by side with Amamiya...

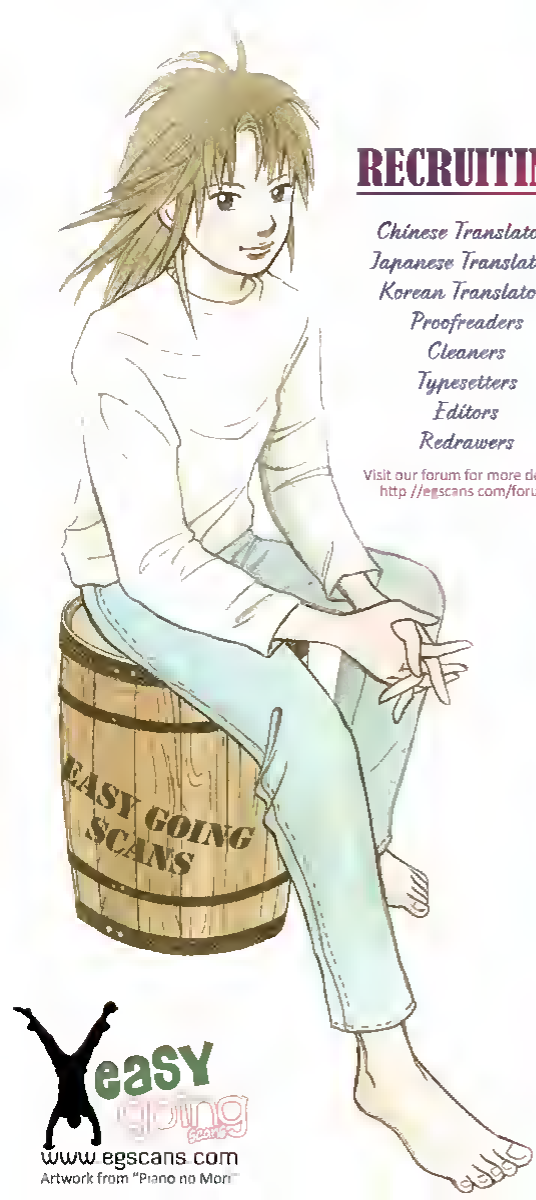
Just how much have I been relying on Amamiya?!
Seriously...

No matter how tired I was, I never gave up.
I didn't want to fall back from his side...

ラ・ド・ド

Hmmm.
I passed up Aubrey Theiss No.1 to check up on you...
That's not true!
But it seems you're not in the mood for practice, huh.
It'll be a piece of cake!
is everything okay? It's show time in just three days.

For Your No.1 END



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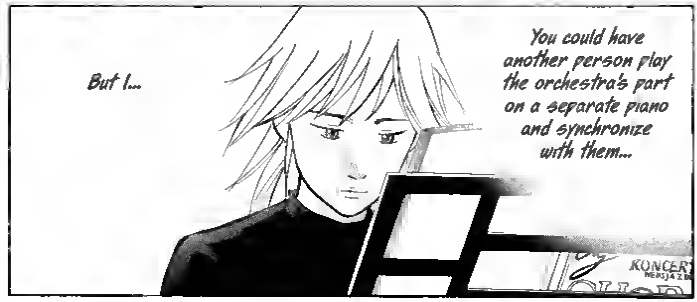
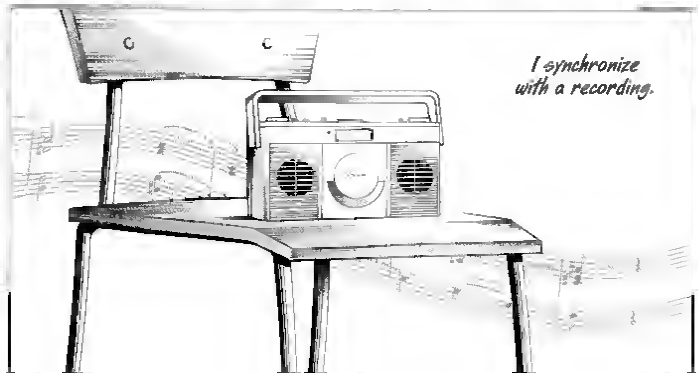
Artwork from "Piano no Mori"

Chapter 188

Ajino Version

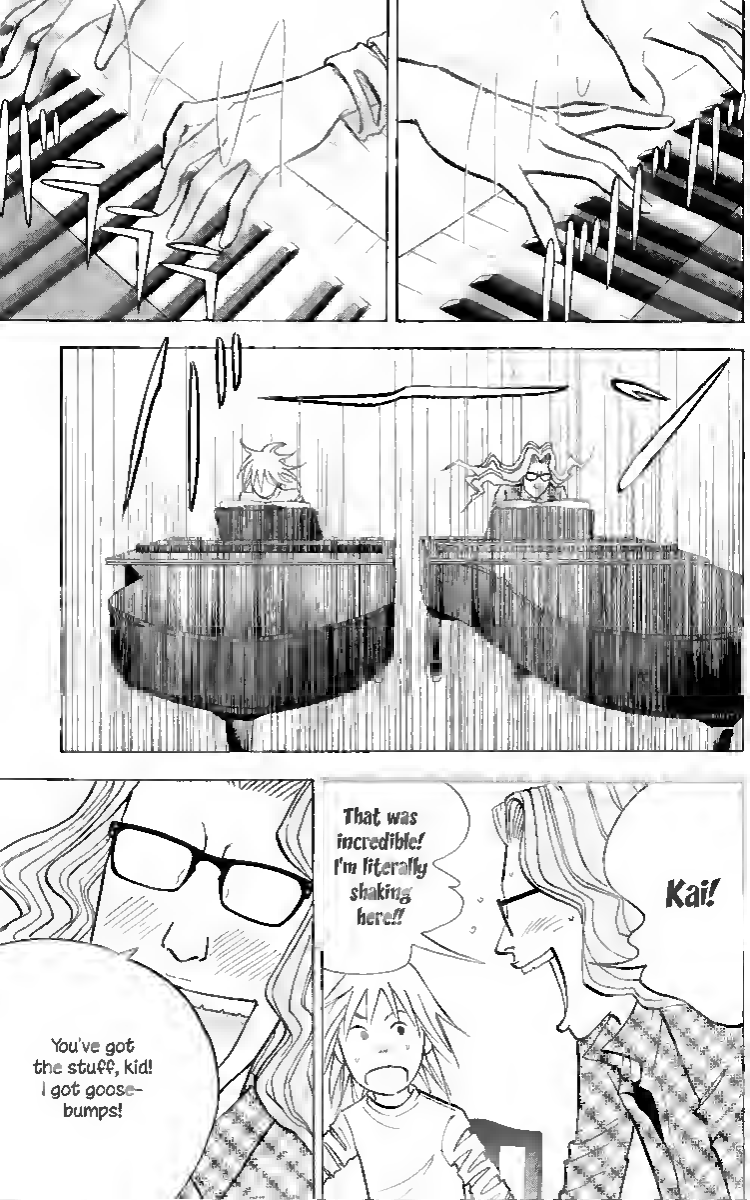
To practice a concerto...


But I...
You could have another person play the orchestra's part on a separate piano and synchronize with them...


I synchronize with a recording.

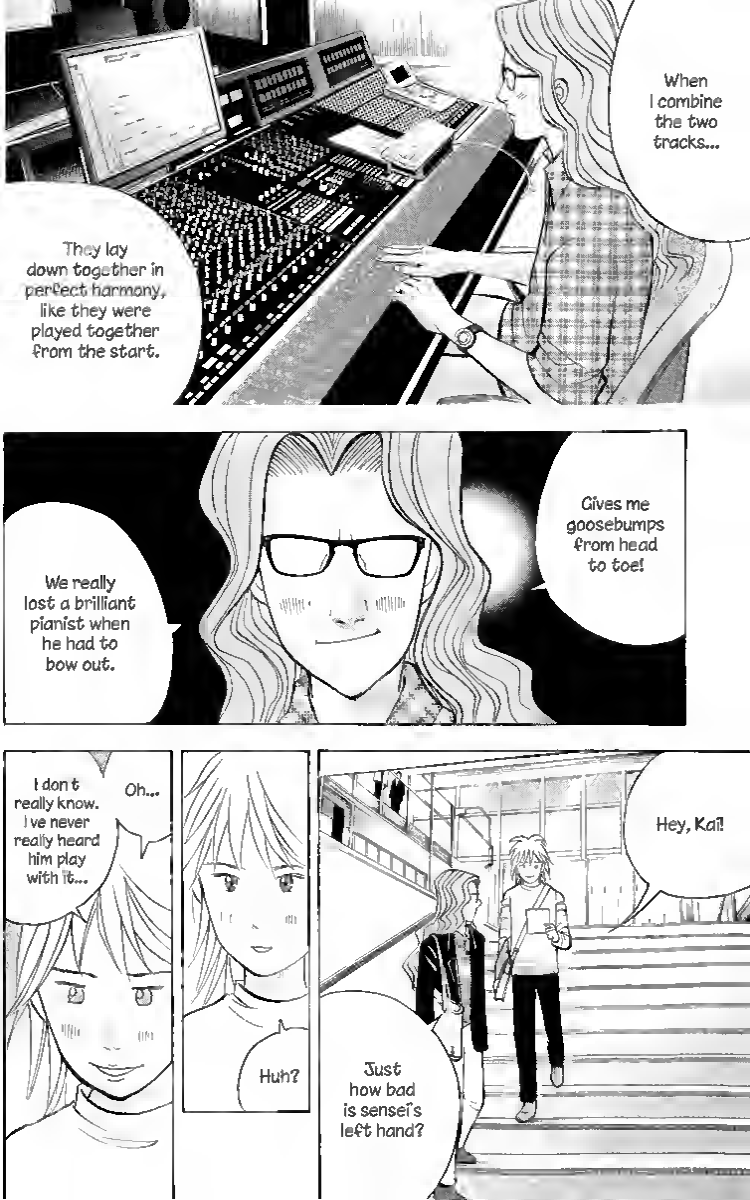
Some people might use a recording of their own playing...
or they might play an orchestral version they have on CD...
CHOPIN
But the version Ajino-sensei played for me...
It was a gift. And the one I love the most.
Before I came to Warsaw,
sometimes I'd get my fellow clown Shibuya-san...

...to play the orchestra part for me to practice with.
The last part, hold it together, Kai!
湘山音楽大学
Now! Let it sing!!
Focus! Focus!


That was incredible! I'm literally shaking here!!
Kai!
You've got the stuff, kid! I got goose-bumps!

Before I forget, here you go!
No 18
On the subject of goose-bumps...
Oh! That reminds me.
No idea what he thinks is wrong with any of these versions...
But according to him, it's still not there yet!
Is this the newest Asino version?!
Yep, the 18th.
Man. Asino-sensei is something else!
No 18

Ajino-sensei injured his left hand in a traffic accident...
And he had to give up his career as a master pianist.
This guy's an honest-to-God genius!
Every time I record for him, I think...
So what he does is, first he plays the right hand all the way through and records that...
Next he plays through the left hand part with his right hand and records that.
And, I mean, that's amazing just by itself, but...


When I combine the two tracks...
They lay down together in perfect harmony, like they were played together from the start.
Gives me goosebumps from head to toe!
We really lost a brilliant pianist when he had to bow out.
Hey, Kai!
Just how bad is sensei's left hand?
Huh?
Oh...
I don't really know. I've never really heard him play with it...

Ah! Shibuya-senpai, you're back again!
Course I am, why shouldn't I be? This is my alma mater. It's like a second home for me!
Ah.
I guess that makes sense...
Anyway, see you around Kai!
Okay! See you, Shibuya-san!
I'm gonna deal with these girls...
No way! You SUCK!!
Then come watch my lesson again!!
The truth is...
Not happening.
Senpai! Hey... Introduce me to that guy!
Oh come on!

The truth is I did know just how bad sensei's left hand was.
It really was just an accident that I heard it at all.
It was an accident...
also where my lessons were held...
Ding Dong
Aiino-sensei's home was...

thud
He gave me a key so I could use it whenever I wanted to.
click
AJIN
And I hadn't been able to get a hold of Ajino...
That day, I just happened to have some free time.
Clatter
?
♪♫♪

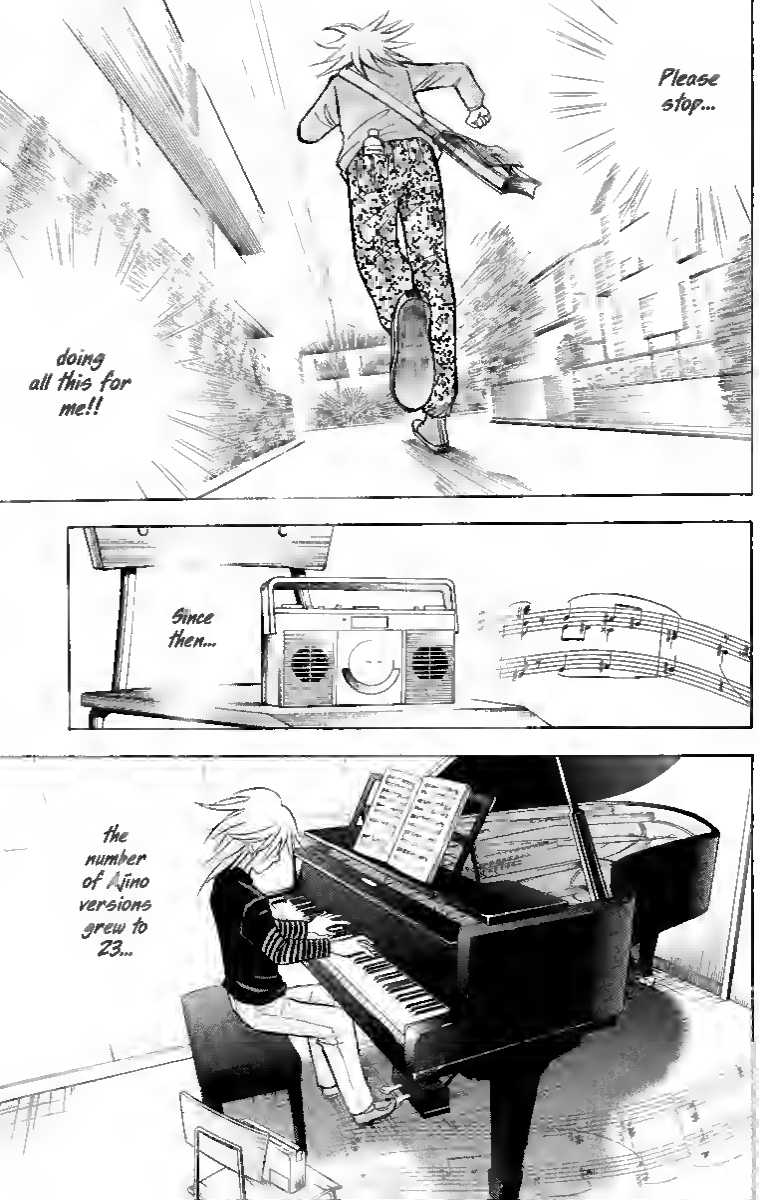
I had ever seen Ajino practicing the piano.
That was the first time...
Volvic

Over and over...
Over and over...
Or with a piano, but...
I don't know whether he was synchronizing with an orchestra...
Beep
Beep
Over and over... and over...
He practised that left hand part.

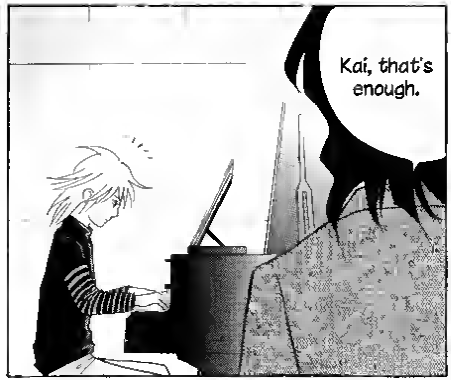
You can do it!
You can do it, Ajino!
No... that left hand is just too stiff...
Is the problem in his ring finger and pinkie?
I can hear an accent there, just a little catch.
Even so, Ajino...
Refused to give up.
Beep
Beep
Roland
He kept going.

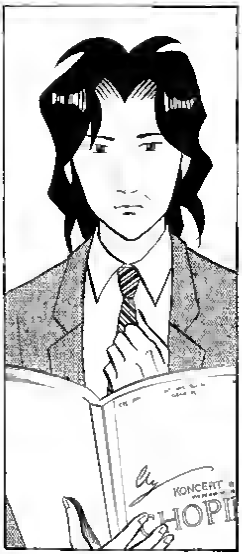
Of Chopin's Concerto No.1.
Was the orchestral part...
And the piece he practiced so relentlessly...

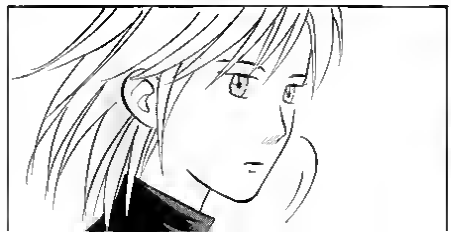
Shut...
He's making it for me to practice with.
He's doing it for me...
Please...
Ajino!
Please just stop!!


Please stop...
doing all this for me!!
Since then...
the number of Aino versions grew to 23...

But he never ended up using his left hand for any of them.
CHOPIN


Kai, that's enough.


KONCERT
CHOPI



No.
You said this would be our last lesson, how could I...!!
I can still go on...
It looks like you're having trouble focusing on the piano.
Let's call it good here.
HARMONIA
KONCERT

キーン
ブラボー

What strength!
Incredible...
What an adventurous spirit!
I have never heard such an energisch* and novel No.1!!
To think Aubrey Theiss could have borne such fruit...

*GERMAN FOR ENERGETIC

Listen! I can hear all this sound drifting in from the other lesson rooms...
And it's throwing me off!
Just one more time, from the top!
Just once more...
I'm still spouting such a stupid lie...
Even though he said this would be our last lesson...
Well then, Kai...
How about we just talk a little instead...
Ajino Version END

Artwork from "Gu...rding".

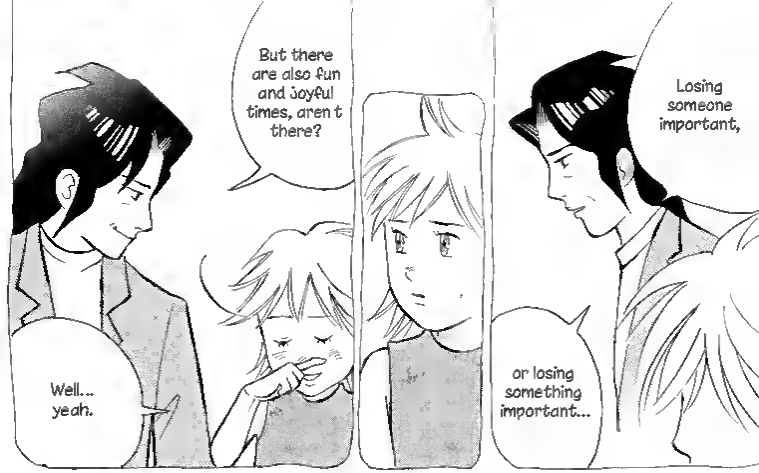
Chapter 189 "Forget It All"

I have...
...once compared the relationship between sheet music and musicians...
...to the relationship between the blueprint and the builders of an architecture.
Do you remember that?
Of course I do.

Depending on how the builders grasp it, the architecture can turn out differently.
No matter how incredible the blueprint is...
It could become a shoddy, Jerry-built building,
Or it could turn into an architecture hailed through the ages like a piece of art.
Hey, hey...
This was the first thing Ajino taught me when I was a kid!
That's right.
Since then, I've...
They're the same song,
but why is this person playing different from this one's?

If there are ten builders,
will they build ten different buildings?
Maybe so!
Then, Then, Then...
...started to think that pianists are essentially builders.
The buildings can also turn out differently depending on the materials used.
They could be built of wood, rock, clay... or even straw.
Oh! That's the story about the three fat pigs!
It's the Three Little Pigs...
Then, what are the materials used by pianists?
And there are also many different types of wood...
Ah!

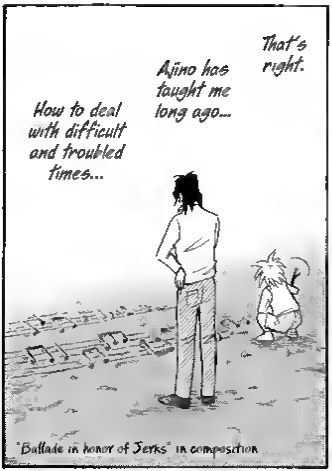
Happiness.
Fury.
Sadness.
Frustration of being beaten up.
The feeling of holding back tears.
I know about those!
Hmm...
For example... one would be emotions...
There are so many of them.
We have to deal with a lot of annoying things just by being alive...
Back then, I just got beaten up by those in the shop the day before.
Hard times, difficult times...
You're right.
We have to go through a lot of those.


But there are also fun and joyful times, aren't there?
Losing someone important,
Well... yeah.
or losing something important...

the only option is to stay away from everyone and live your whole life in isolation.
If you don't want to get hurt...
You can't do that.
I mean, if you don't eat, you're gonna die.
Ayaka

Hardships strengthen the heart...
and joyful experiences enrich the mind.

Kai,
Both... I'd rather just have one of them.
I believe that a person needs both to grow.
Make everything your material!
There is certainly nothing that can't be of use.
For Ichinose Kai the pianist...
That's what you said, right?


How to deal with difficult and troubled times...
Ajino has taught me long ago...
That's right.
"Ballade in honor of Serks" in composition

I guess your great memory is a problem of its own!
Haha... You really do remember it well.

I haven't forgotten a single thing you said!

Forget it all.
Forget everything I have ever taught you.
?
Then here is your last lecture...

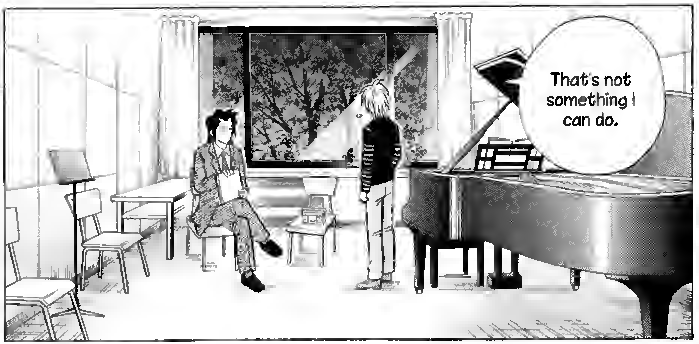
"Forgetting" is also a very important talent.
You want me to... forget all of it?
Ba-dump
Huh?!
Ba-dump
Ba-dump
Gulp
Ba-dump
Ah...
Leave me!!
Ajimo is trying to...
Ba-dump
Ba-dump

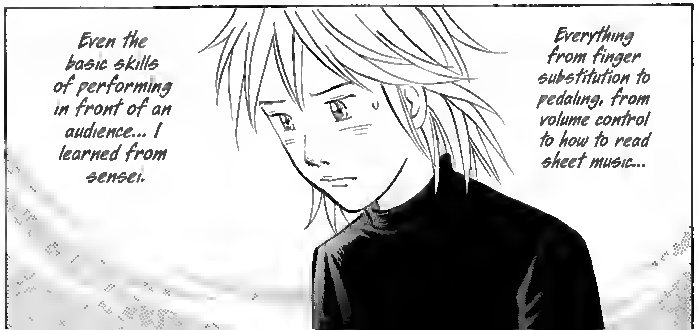
That was a wonderful performance, Ms. Theiss!
How did it feel... to play with the orchestra in the final round?!
So you are going for the champion, aren't you?
Please tell us about your masculine attire.

Ahh... That's the first decent question I've heard!

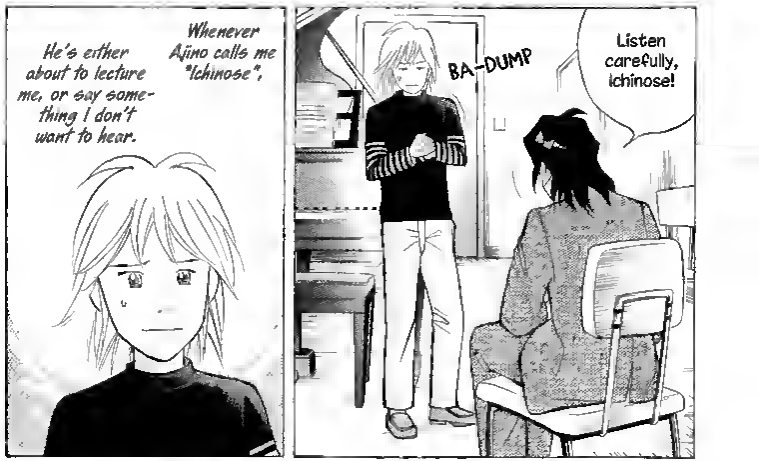
Ms. Theiss! Who's your rival?
Which contestant piques your interest the most?

That...
UNIWERSYTET MUZYCZNY FRYDERYKA CHOPINA


That's not something I can do.


Even the basic skills of performing in front of an audience... I learned from sensei.
Everything from finger substitution to pedaling, from volume control to how to read sheet music...

That's not what I said.
Ahaha... Don't be silly.
You want me to go amnesiac?
The list just goes on and on now that I've started.
He has also taught me all sorts of things in daily life... How to greet others, and table manners too...
And it wasn't just about the piano!
You...


He's either about to lecture me, or say something I don't want to hear.
Whenever Ajino calls me "Ichinose",
BA-DUMP
Listen carefully, Ichinose!

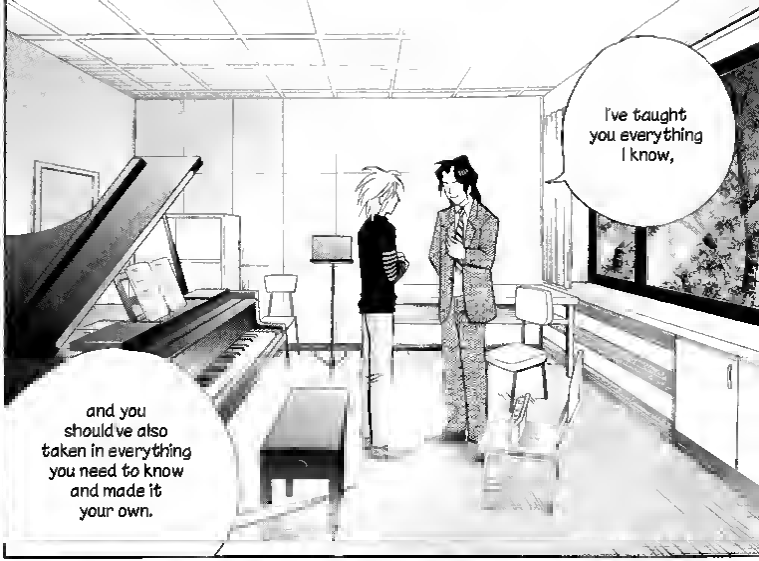
...trying to say his farewells?!
Right now, is Ajino...

Everything you need... is already engraved in your heart and soul.
.....
Here! I'm giving this to you.
!
Ah... Let's see.
fumble
fumble
For example, this...
I guess I should just show it to you...
This...
This is a...

A piece... of my Piano in the Forest.

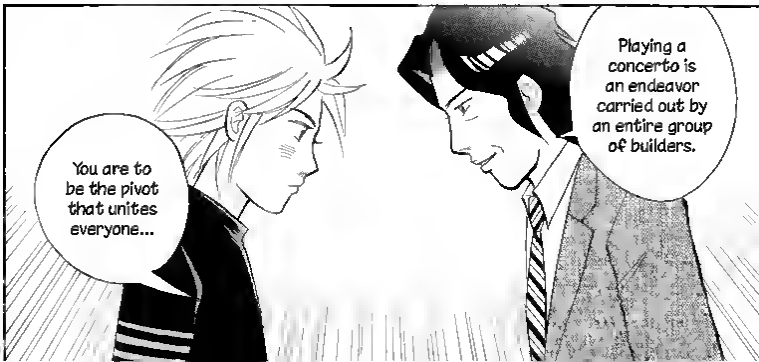
Reiko-san handed it to me before I left Japan.
She asked me to deliver it to you as a talisman...

I've decided to give it to you after all!
I thought I'd listen to the final performance with it as well, but...
I listened to your first performance with this little guy,
and of course, your second performance as well...
So it came all the way...
together with Ajina..
Things that truly belong to you will never be lost!
Even without that, the Piano in the Forest resides within you, right?
Look, Kai!


I've taught you everything I know,
and you should've also taken in everything you need to know and made it your own.

Take on the finals with absolutely nothing in your mind.

So don't worry. Just forget everything!


Playing a concerto is an endeavor carried out by an entire group of builders.
You are to be the pivot that unites everyone...

And the audience...
Their breathing...
The sound of the orchestra...
How you communicate with them...
...will decide the outcome of the competition.

The biggest rival is Wei Pang from China.
OHHH
Among all the living pianists, the only one that interests me is...
Kai Ichinose from Japan, and no one else!
As for the contestant I find the most intriguing...
Ah... Rather than calling him a contestant, I'd say he's already a pianist!
Huh?
OHHH...

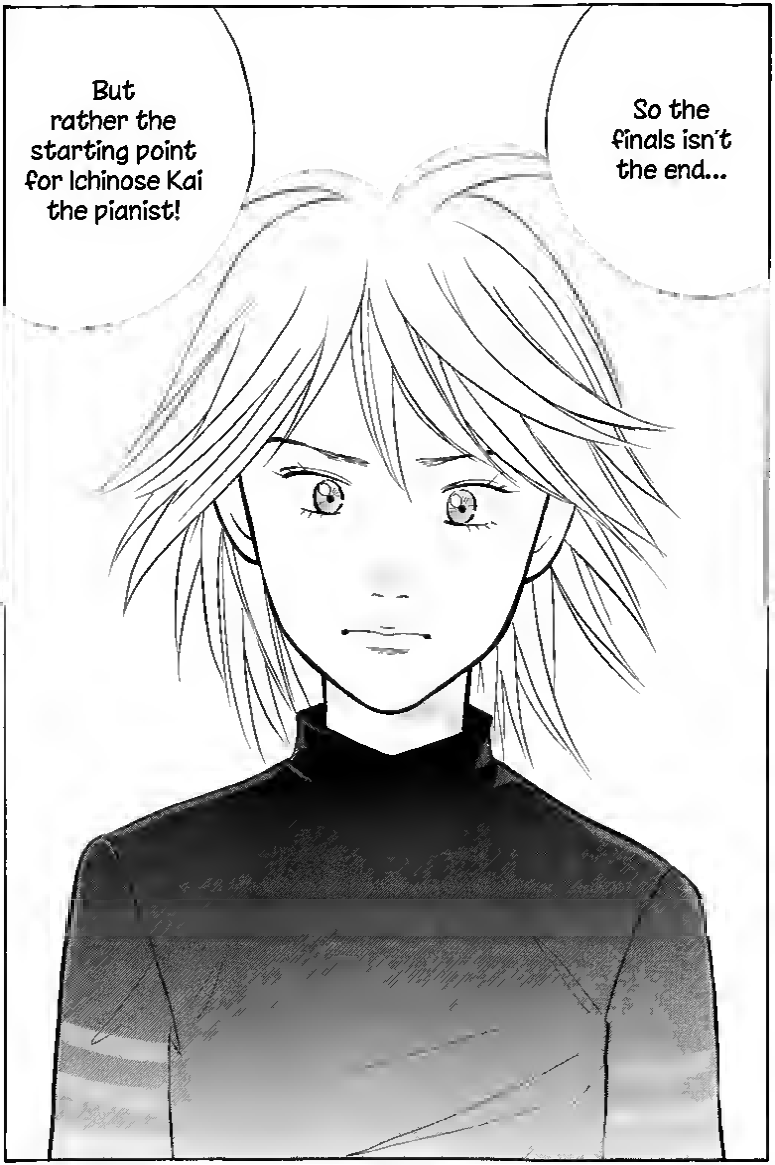
is that so?
W-Well... I guess everyone has their own taste.
Yeah, she did!
Aubrey Theiss... She actually said that?
Ah... Sensei!
Ah... I'm in a hurry, so let's leave it at that!
W...
What's with that frankness, Theise...
I got all flustered just thinking about it, but she actually said it out loud...
Haa
Haa
W...

But they don't matter anymore.
What edition of the scores you use and so on...
Things like "Poland's Chopin"...
The remaining 1%...
No... the infinitely important 1% that remains...
...is to play according to your instincts when you're on stage!
99% of that is achieved through learning.

There's no point in playing the way you practiced!
You know why, don't you?
Because the stage...
...is alive!
That's right.

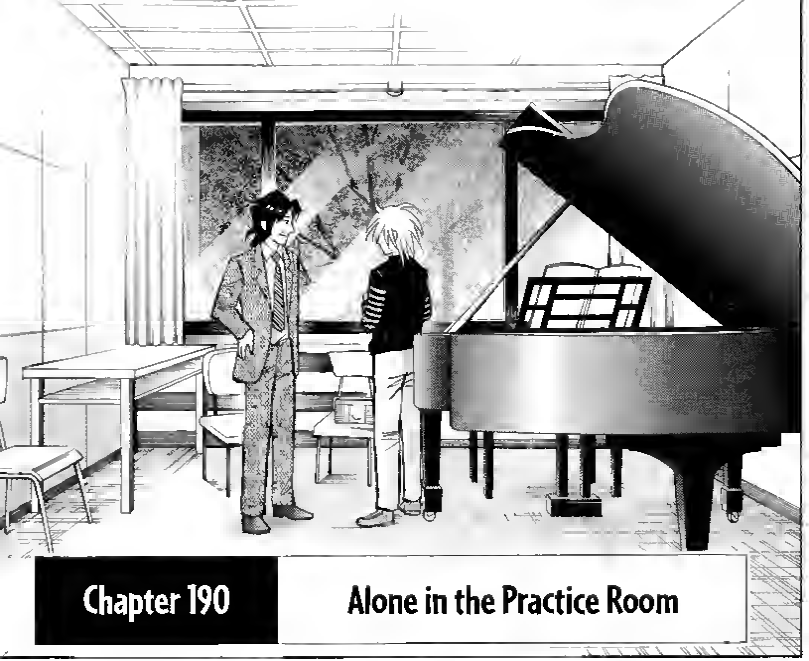
Which is why you must clear your mind of distractions...
...and concentrate with all your might.

You are already you!
Even without my teachings...
It's all right! Believe in yourself!
Should I also forget... what you just said?
Haha...
Forget it all...
You have already become an "original" called Ichinose Kai!
You have already taken what you want from me. By processing what you've learned...

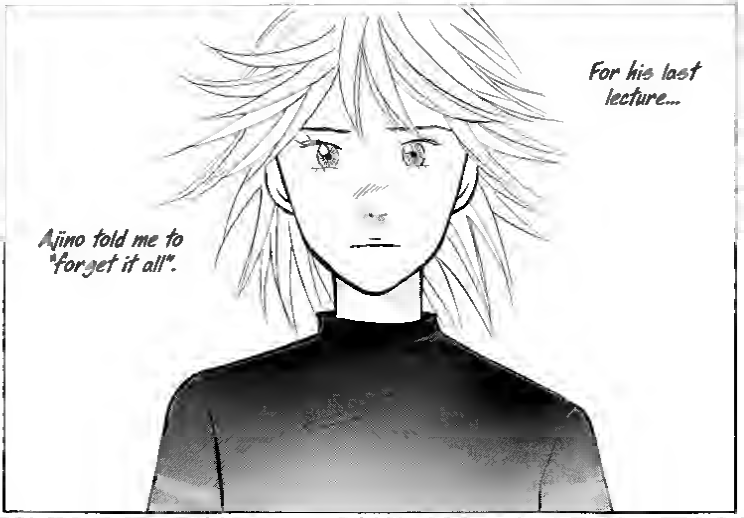


"Forget It All" END

Easy Going Scans



Chapter 190 Alone in the Practice Room



Huh?
Don't use that recording anymore!
Ah... that's right!
You can't! It's mine...
CLACK
You even want to take this away?!
What?! Aijino Version No. 23?!
RIP
You say that, but I've got a pretty good memory of what happened before...
AH! My precious tape!!
You thief...
I'll hold onto these till the time is right.
Haha...
What are you, a grade schooler?

I wanted to play an actual accompaniment together with you...
To be honest...
It can never take the place of a real orchestra.
A recording is canned, after all. It's not natural.
But if you keep using the same recording to practice, it'll influence your performance.
I won't take it away from you.
POP
So that's why he kept going until he made 23 versions...
Ah...
I'm also gonna forget what you've just taught me, sa...
I'm probably gonna keep using it!
Ehehe...
Well...

Just keep it under control!
Haha.
Alone in the practice room.
He's left me behind...
A fragment of the Piano in the Forest...
In my hands, I have Ajino Version No. 23 and...
Sob...

That's...
You could have given him a day or two...
I get where you're coming from, but Kai's in pain right now.
That wouldn't have changed anything.
That's pretty harsh, yo know...
Telling him to forget it all.
But right now, Kai...
...is probably crying, don't you think?
You sound like you're just pushing him away...

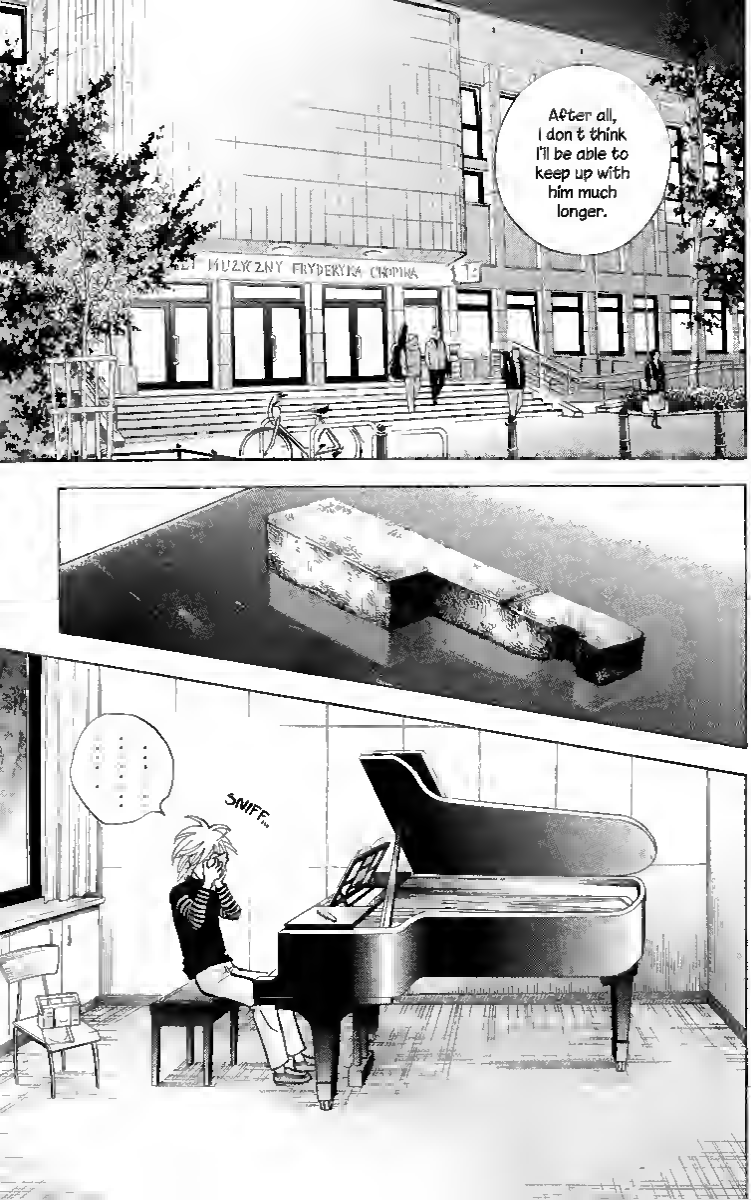
The walls are not sound-proof, so I can only cry without making a sound.
!!!
...With all kinds of thoughts running through my mind, I cry my heart out.

Well...
Perhaps his pent-up feelings will finally be released now that he doesn't have to put up a brave act...
If there's too much cluttering up his mind...
When it reaches capacity, he can't fit anything new in.
At the very least, he might be able to clear his mind.
That's what I hope...
But if there's one thing that makes Kai especially amazing...
It's how he cultivates the seeds of learning planted within him.
Still, Kai's memory really is impressive.
Yeah, I know.

He'd read everything he could get his hands on, and copy every page into his brain...
flip
For example...
Whenever there was something he didn't understand, he'd go around to every library he could and research it.
Then he'd copy it all down in his 'territory'.
At first I got really taken aback by that.
He'd do it all the time.
Then he'd think about it and think about it and come up with his own answer...
Ahh, I see what he meant when he said that on the errand!
He'd always say he wanted answers fast!

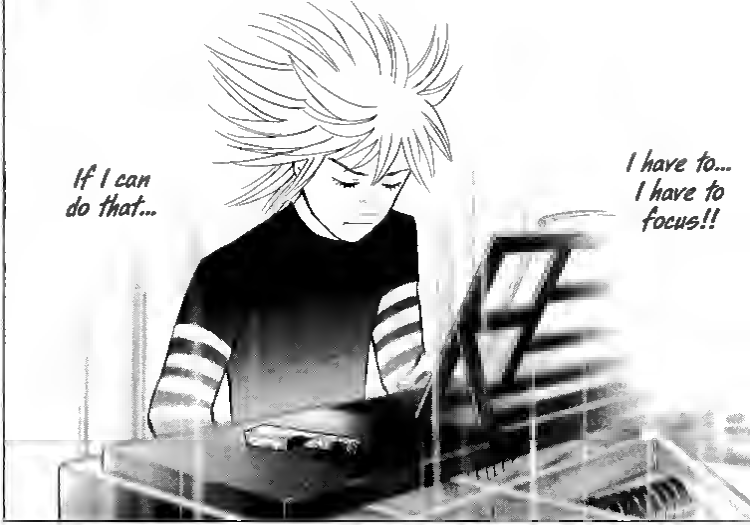
Sounds like you had a rough time.
Aww~~
Haha...
But, actually Kai was an easy student to teach.
I probably studied more than I ever had before in my life.
During these 6 years with Kai... In order to answer his volley of questions to his satisfaction...
...So, can you really let Kai go just like that, Sousuke?
Ah! I know what you mean!
Because he wasn't just learning passively...

So he'll be fine even though I'm not with him anymore...
I've always treated Kai very seriously...
Of course.
Yes!
I want to see him go further. Much further...
I want him to learn at the feet of many great masters around the world.
Those are my true feelings.
...Come now. How do you *really* feel?
Hmm.


After all, I don't think I'll be able to keep up with him much longer.
MUZYCZNY FRYDERYKA CHOPINA
SNIFF...

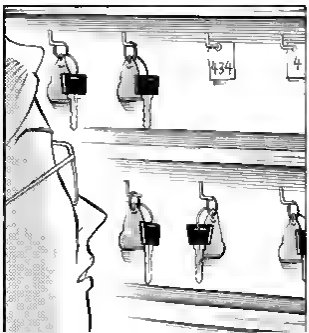
drip
Seems to have calmed me down.
Doing all the crying...
A person's life is full of all kinds of experiences.
But could that really be true...?
Ajino told me I already had everything I need right now...
.....
N 23
You shouldn't use that recording anymore
N 23

... A...Anyway...
I need to file away all these memories that are rampaging around my head...
And just reset my brain for a bit...
So this is what it means to play only on my reflexes?!
...But is something like that even possible?!
...In that case, there's only one thing to do...
:)
I can do it as long as my body knows how, right?!


If I can do that...
I have to... I have to focus!!

Huh?
Oh, is that really the time?

RECEPCJA
Ahaha... No way, are you serious?!
Puahaha no! It was a joke, a joke!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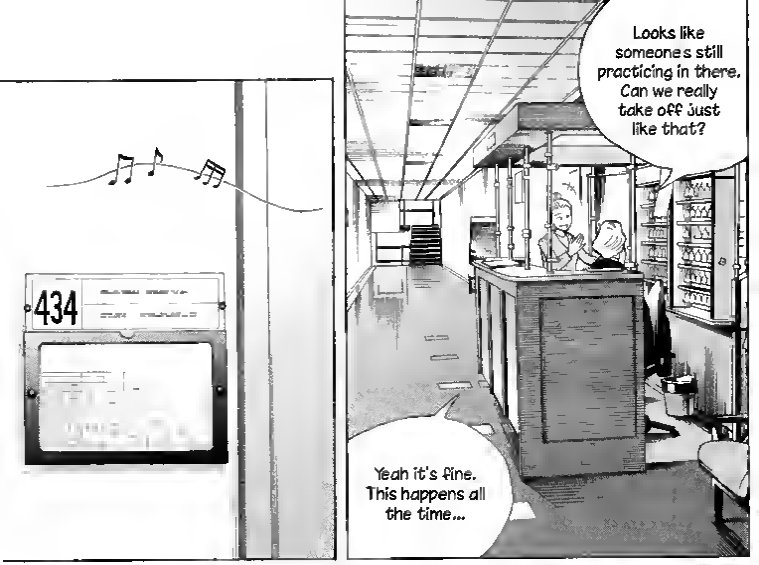

434
Looks like someone's still practicing in there. Can we really take off just like that?
Yeah it's fine. This happens all the time...

And I can go back to the forest!!
If I can do that, my mind will go blank...

I can become transparent...
And then, once I'm empty...

And fade into 'non-existence'...

I can hear a piano playing the orchestral part...
Where is this coming from?
Is this the power of being 'non-existent'...?
Is it my imagination...?
Huh?
.....

Let's see what happens when I change my tempo.
And it's syncing up with my playing?
It's coming from the next room?
...
Seriously?
Haha, they're seriously keeping up with me.
How about if we speed things up?
If you're going to try me...

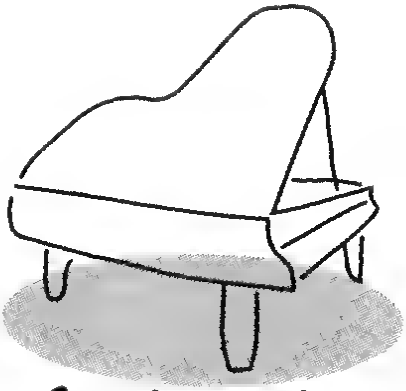
Amaz-
ing!
Then,
then, how
about...
Okay let's
go even
faster.
The tempo
Chopin
intended...

This...
Ahh...
It feels so good...
It feels...
This music...

This music is...
435

Ama-
miya...
I...

Alone in the Practice Room END



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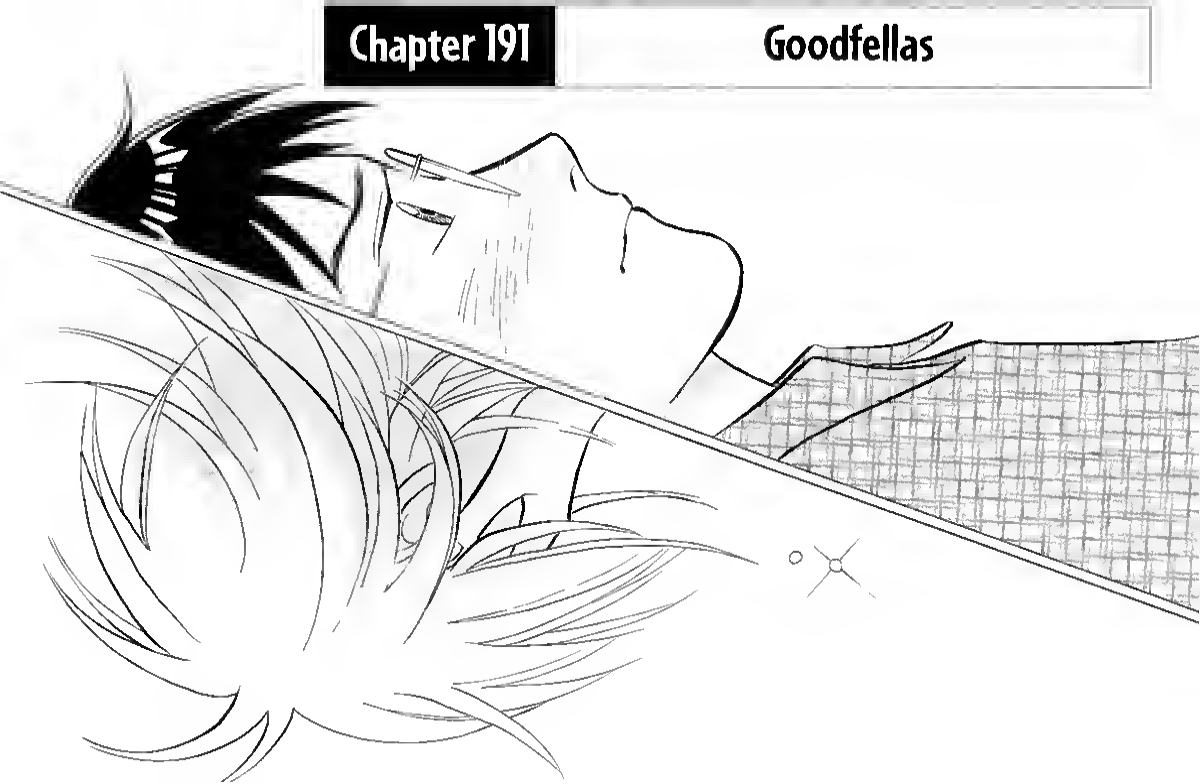
Chapter 191 Goodfellas



...I hadn't planned on crying but...
I'm so sorry for blowing up at you like that...
Kai, I'm sorry!
Crying like this...
Seeing Kai...
I'm the worst...
I...

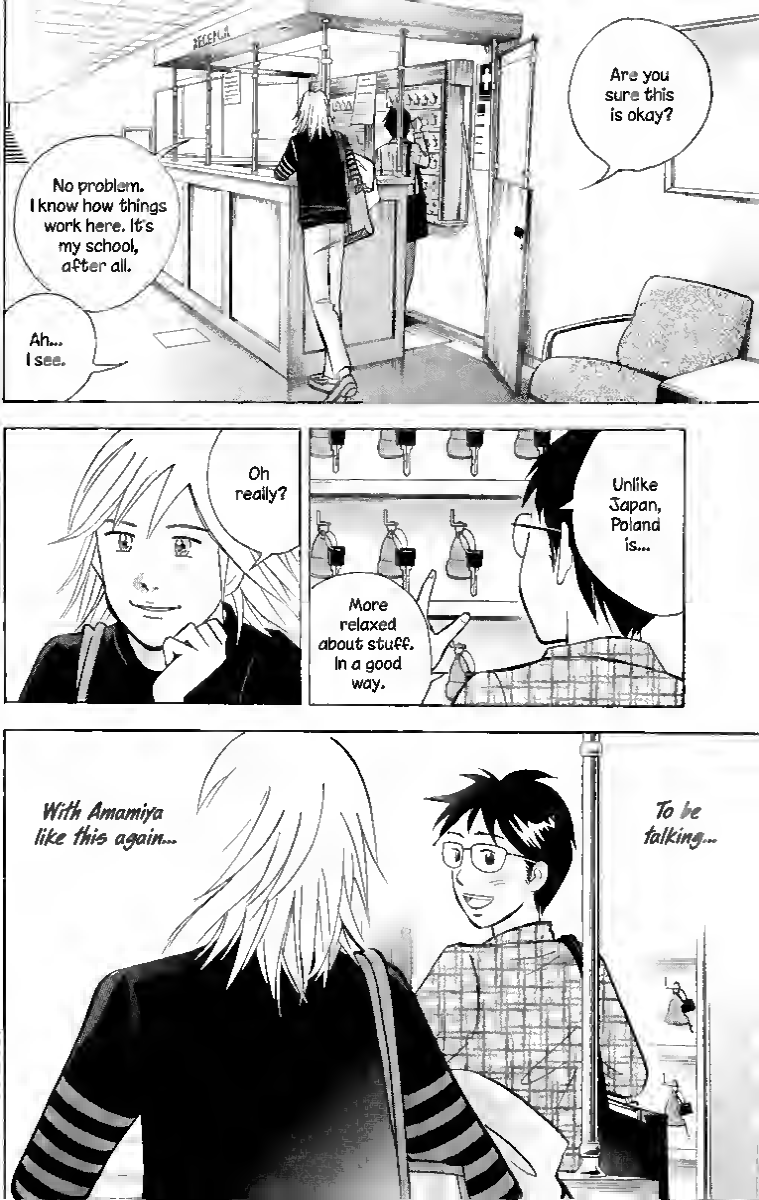
There's nothing to forgive.
Oh come on...
Please forgive me...
I'm really sorry!
It was my fault for babbling non-stop at that time.
I know how you felt, Amamiya.
The fog...

Not just from yesterday, but for all these years...
The dross that's been building up in my heart...
The fog that's been hanging over my heart is lifting...
Kai...
Is finally fading away...

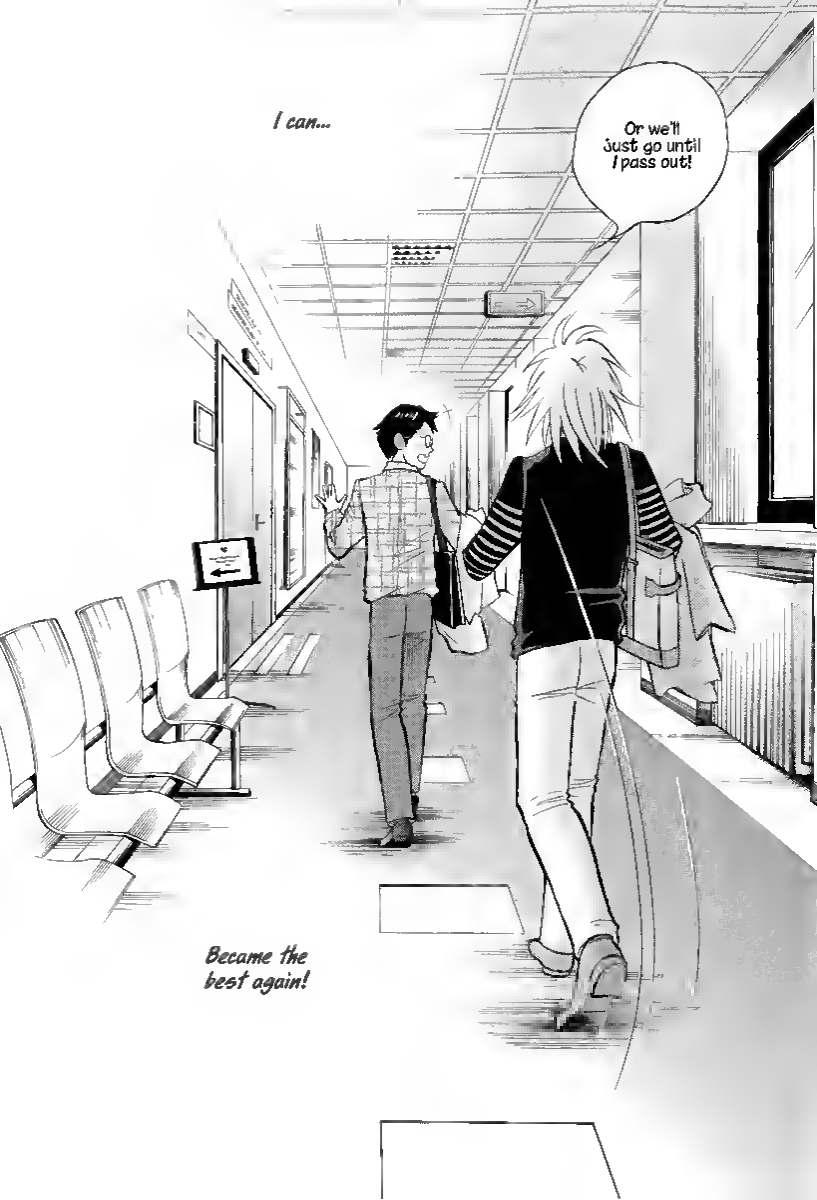
I... lost myself,
and I almost lost my
dearest friend.
Thank you,
Kai...

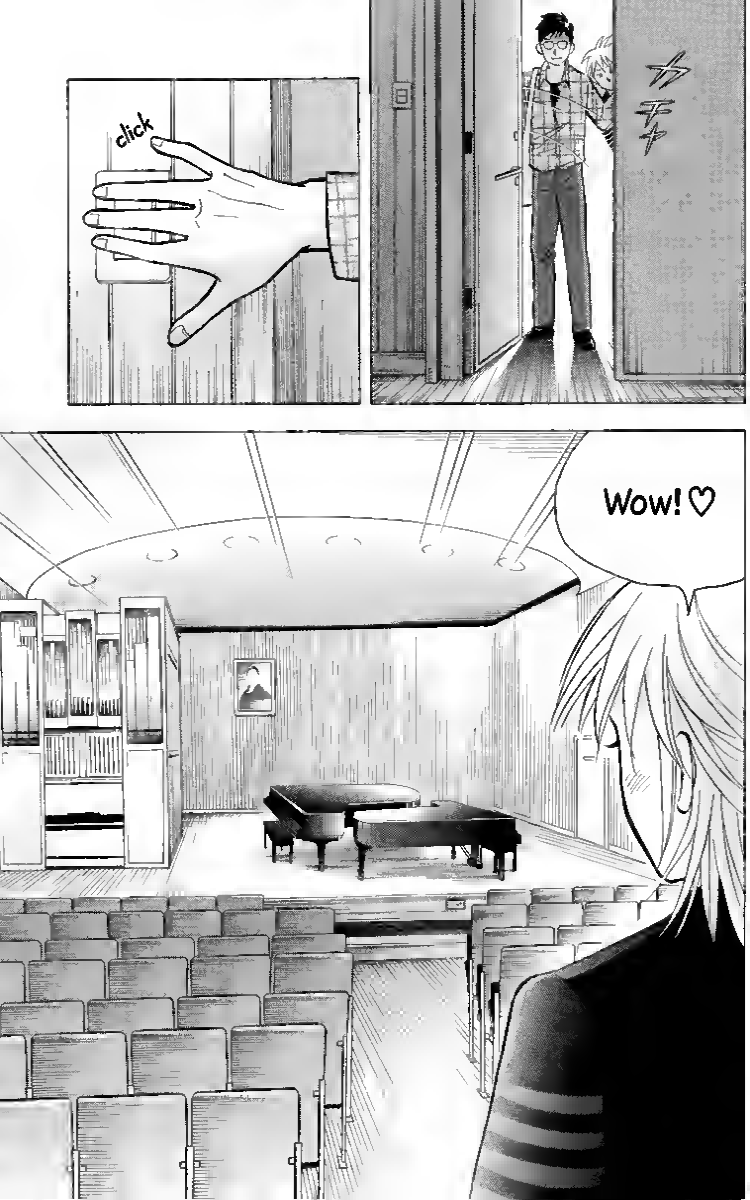
I should be the one thanking you!
Thank you so much for coming, Amamiya...
Huh?
You came running when I was in trouble...
Today... I had my very last lesson with Asino.
No, that's not it.
Because of me, right?
In trouble?

That's right... Ajino-sensei did say he'd only stay with Kai... till this competition is over...
Ah...
Well...
Well, if that's the case, I should have come sooner.
I wanted to practice the orchestral part and I lost track of time...
I'm just lucky you decided to stick around.
Yep! I'm just getting warmed up!
Wait, it's already 11 o'clock. Is that okay?
Ah...
Then let's have a little change of scenery?
Huh?


Are you sure this is okay?
No problem. I know how things work here. It's my school, after all.
Ah... I see.
Oh really?
Unlike Japan, Poland is...
More relaxed about stuff. In a good way.
With Amamiya like this again...
To be talking...

Just chatting like old friends...
So naturally.
Let's go!
I'll stick with you 'til you pass out!
This will do.
Okay!
Haha...
We'll see about that!
But I'm never out of energy!
Ah... Sorry, Amamiya...


I can...
Or we'll just go until I pass out!
Became the best again!


click
Wow!♡

It's my turn to return the favor...
Up till now, you've helped me out so many times...
Thanks, Amamiya!
Can we really use this room?
Of course!
Of course!
Huh? Is that so?
All the little pieces changing from black to white, one after another. I understood.
I just changed the way I look at things a little, and it was like a game of Othello...
I noticed, you know.

It's like you've been guiding me, all the way here!
If I hadn't met you, I would have cut my ties with the piano long ago!
Are you serious?
It is gratitude that I felt for you... I realized how foolish it was of me to envy and begrudge you...
Absolutely!
My thoughts just come flowing out in words.
Then how about you show me your thanks...
Well...
Since I last felt so wonderful...
I wonder how long it's been...

...And help me get this cover off!
Ahaha... well that sounds practical!
But you know, Amamiya...
I never would have stepped out into the world of light!
If you hadn't transferred in back then...
I should be the one saying thanks.

When the piano in the forest burned down, I probably would have...
I definitely wouldn't have been able to learn the piano from Asino...

Ahh... you mean like Kinpira-kun said?
Gige...
Tsk~
At best a handyman...
Become a pimp or a gigolo, wouldn't I!

Thanks, for everything, Amamiya!
Anyway...
Kai.
Oh man that takes me back!
Gyahaha... C'mon man don't call him '-kun'!

I never had a chance to tell you but...
I was always thanking the God of Pianos.
I kept telling him thanks... for letting me meet you!
URTEXT
That's true... This has always been how Kai felt since we first met...
Ah...
...So...
I guess that puts us in the same boat!
I don't know...

...as a replacement for a full orchestra, but...
...How good my piano playing will be...
I'll stay with him as long as he needs!
This is all I can do for him...
Right now...
And then... Kai's piano...

Whoa...
I'm getting goose-bumps...
Joins in!

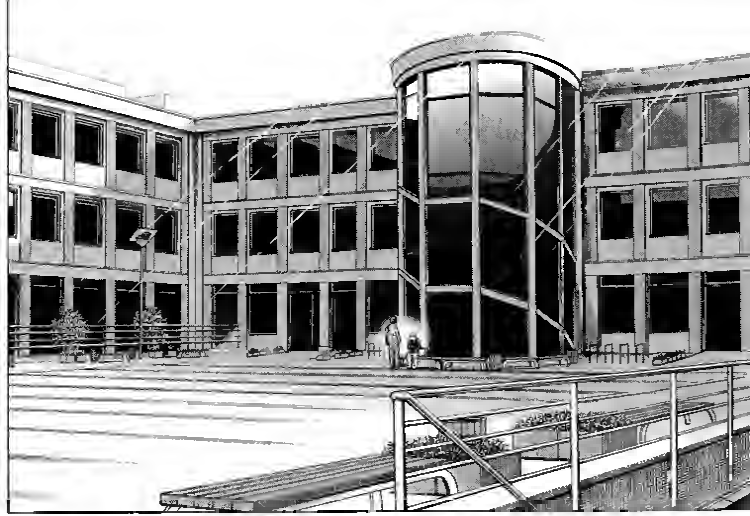
Accompanying this music is the highest form of indulgence...
And...
As always, resounds deep in my heart...
Kai's piano...
Like I could touch the sky.
It makes me feel...
How can he make me feel so...
How...

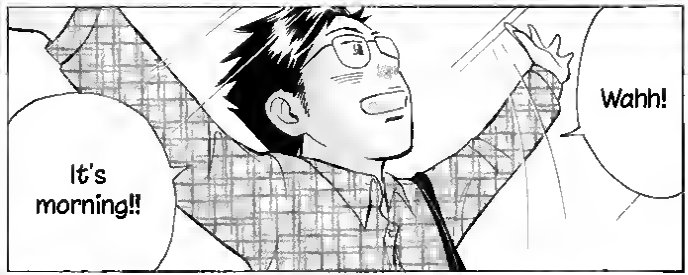
So...
so free!!

RING RING
He's here!
Kai's here!!
Sousuke!
Sousuke!!
MUZYCZNY FRYDERYKA CHOPINA
TAXI

Oh don't be like that! Let's just take a little peek.
Well now that we know, let's head back!
C'mere, c'mere!
I get that you're worried, but this is being overprotective...
It's 1am... How is he still so energetic?
00:56
Both of 'em...
What?
He wasn't in room 434. They're actually playing in room 351!

It's perfect, Sousuke...
Yes.
Isn't it great, Sousuke?
They're all great kids.
Yes, they are.




Wahh!
It's morning!!

Let's silence that monster in your stomach.
GROOOW
Could you?
But, forget about that...
I've never experienced such a refreshing morning!
Sorry, I kept you up all the way to morning.
GROOOW
Haha, don't sweat it.

So...
Really?!
My apartment's just over there, so I can get you some breakfast!
But I don't think that'll be enough...
Yeah...
Then... you must do your best for his sake in the finals!
Oh...
Yeah, he doesn't go back on what he says.
Ajino-sensei really isn't going to oversee your lessons anymore?
Huh?!
What, are you going for the first place then?
Huh?

Ah.
Yeah. I wanna win!
Ahaha... kidding! Just kidding! Forget what I just said!
It's not something I can get just by aiming!!
This is surprising. Kai actually cares about his ranking...
Is something the matter, Kai...?
ドクン
ドクン
Goodfellas END
Hey...
Just a dumb joke!!

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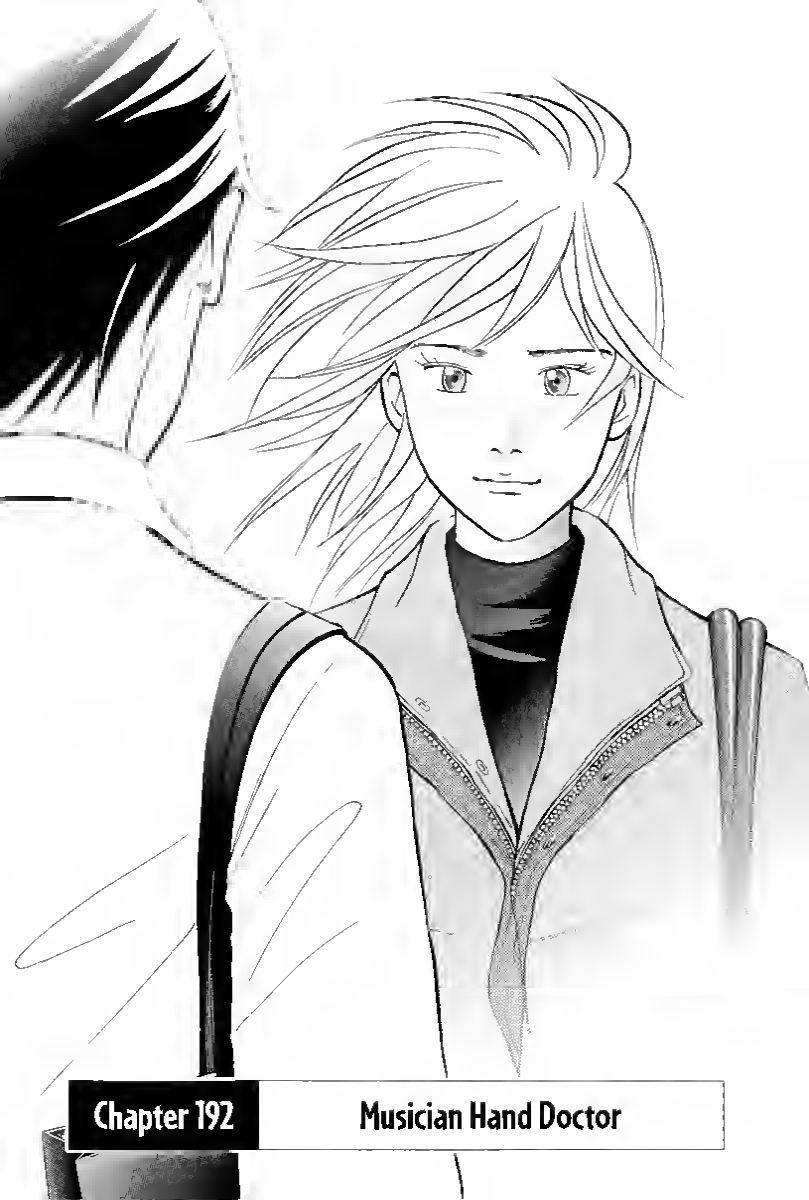
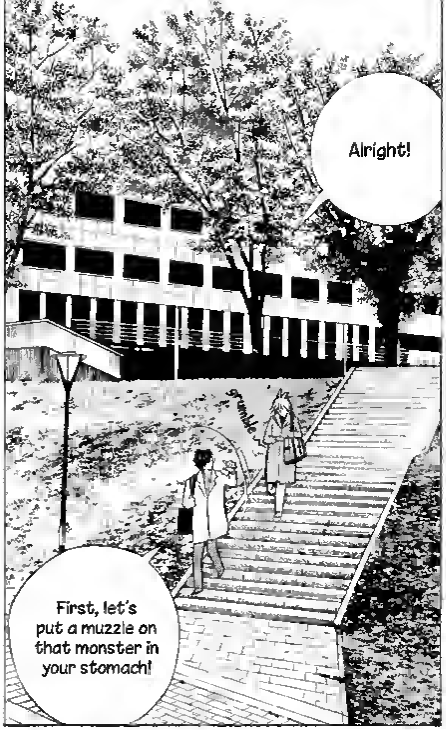


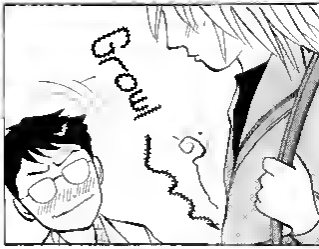
Chapter 192 Musician Hand Doctor

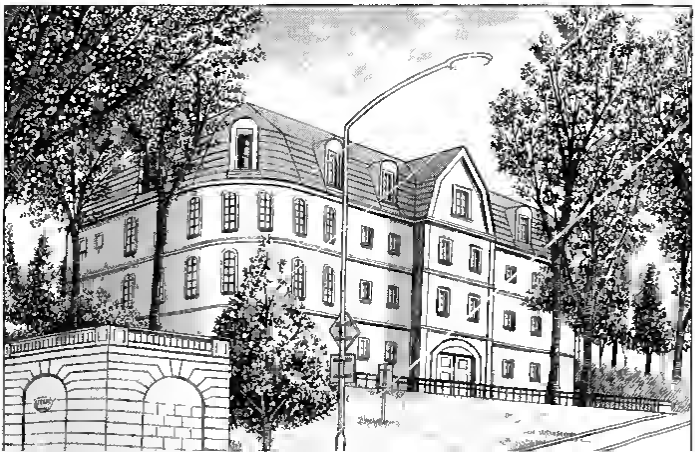
Now he's saying he wants to win? There must be some reason...
Even though he always used to say that the world of the piano did not revolve around 'winning' and 'losing'...
I'm serious, nothing's wrong!
Please, just tell me what's going on.
I injured my hand about half a year ago...
Well, actually...
There has to be some kind of reason!!
What?!
...shouldn't just laugh it off like that!
You....
I don't mean like seriously injured. I just kind of jammed my finger when I fell while trying to walk on my hands...
Ah!

And so your finger got fixed?
You mean Monsieur Jean-Jacque Serrault?
That's true. Grandpa Jean told me that even a jammed finger is no laughing matter and found me a hospital...
I guess I should have known! You couldn't have passed the previous rounds otherwise.
Yeah...
PHEW
Yeah, they fixed it right up!
Im... important things...?
BA-DUMP
But...
I realized a few more important things while I was there in the hospital...


Alright!
Grumble
First, let's put a muzzle on that monster in your stomach!

It's kind of a long story...
BA-DUMP
BA-DUMP

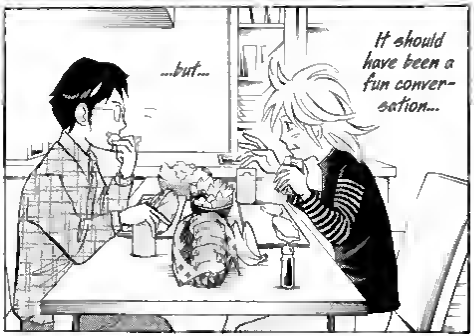

Growl

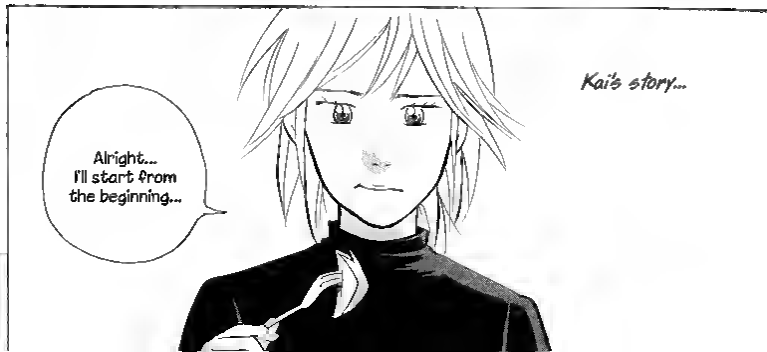


Kai was pretty blown away by my apartment...

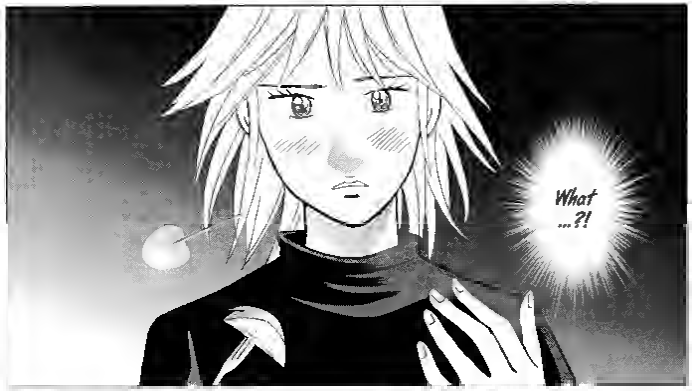
A gorgeous breakfast spread, and my [illegible] guest...

...so, about what you were saying before...


...but...
It should have been a fun conversation...


Kai's story...
Alright... I'll start from the beginning...

What?
What?
Huh?


What ...?!

Ah...

The story Kai told me...
Was so shocking...
That as I listened, I didn't taste a single thing I ate.

You did the cooking... I'd feel bad making you do the washing too...
Just leave those! I'll wash them later.
Your place is great! You have all those ingredients, and practically everything you need!
I didn't really make anything... I just cut up the ingredients...
Besides, I'm good at washing!
Already? Jeez.
Besides, I'm already done...

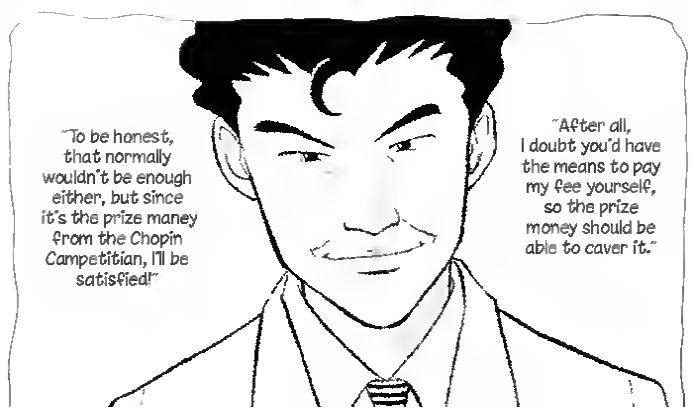
So...
I figure slamming my finger like that wasn't just a coincidence. It was fate.
...So anyway...
You found a doctor "connected" to the doctor you were searching for?
At the hospital you went to in Tokyo...
He performs all the delicate surgeries on professional athletes.
He's actually a sports medical specialist right now...
His name was Doctor Nashimoto...
Yeah.

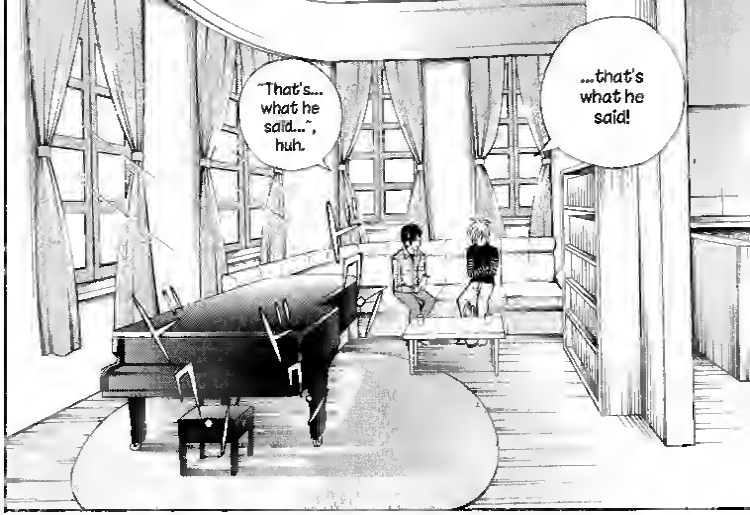
I got it.
...So, did you end up meeting him? The...
'Musician Hand Doctor'...?
Yeah.
Not yet...
I had to look into some things, so it's taken some time...
Oh, that's right!
I have a copy of that article with me...
But right before I came to Warsaw I was able to speak with him on the phone!

He's taken care of musicians from all over the world. Apparently he's super busy.
He works at a university hospital in St. Louis in the USA...
Doctor Nakao...
In his own words...
Well.
So... what did Doctor Nakao say to you?
Yeah, it's a surprise...
But isn't it amazing? The world's top expert in treating musicians hands is from Japan.

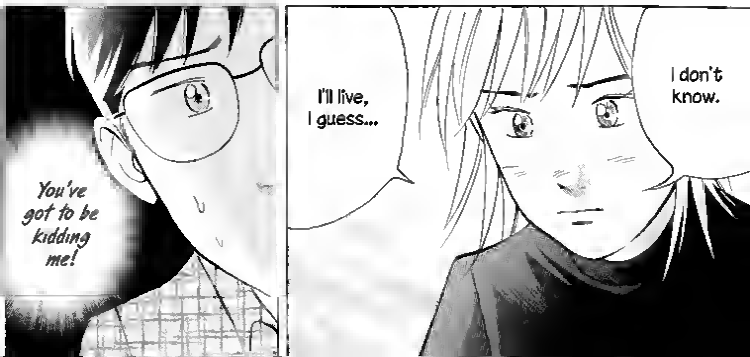
"You have to win the first place at the Chopin Competition!"
"I'll take the job, but on one condition."

"I'd be happy to do the operation!"
"If the future of a musician capable of winning such a prestigious competition is on the line..."


"To be honest, that normally wouldn't be enough either, but since it's the prize maney from the Chopin Campetitian, I'll be satisfied!"
"After all, I doubt you'd have the means to pay my fee yourself, so the prize money should be able to caver it."


...that's what he said!
"That's... what he said...", huh.

But...
...if that operation doesn't work out...
How will you...?!

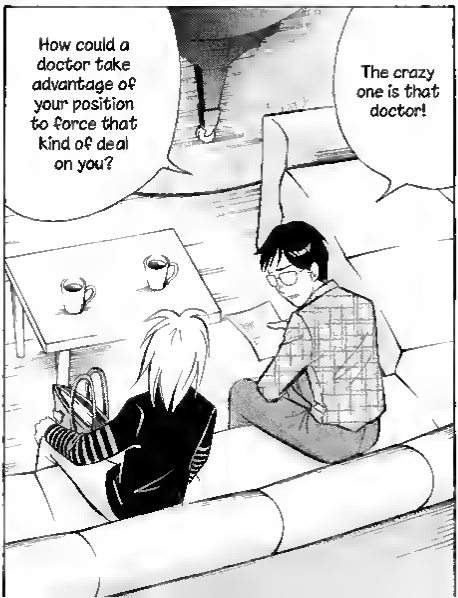

I don't know.
I'll live, I guess...
You've got to be kidding me!

If he doesn't win...
He doesn't get the operation.
Of course not.
Have you told Ajino-sensei about this?!
It all comes down to the day after tomorrow...
We only have today... and tomorrow...
Well...
Time isn't the only issue here!!
No...

No...

I guess this really is too crazy.

But it's true that I don't have the money.
Haha...
In fact, I think it's good that he's so clear on the terms!

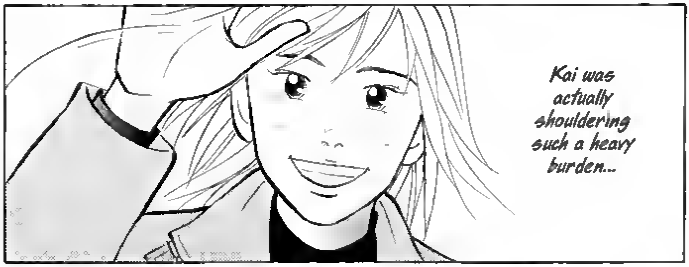

How could a doctor take advantage of your position to force that kind of deal on you?
The crazy one is that doctor!

But if you aim too hard at this...
Well... with your skills, it's not like it's impossible, Kai.
Nothing will come of me getting all worked up!
You're right!
Your piano playing won't be at your best!
And let it cloud your mind...
I didn't even think about it during the first round, or the second...
Those kind of things go flying out of my head when I play anyway.
I got it! I'll forget all about it and focus!

But... but I'll do anything I can to help you!
Thanks! That's really reassuring!
...That said, we only have two days left...
No problem! That's plenty!

It was a huge shock.

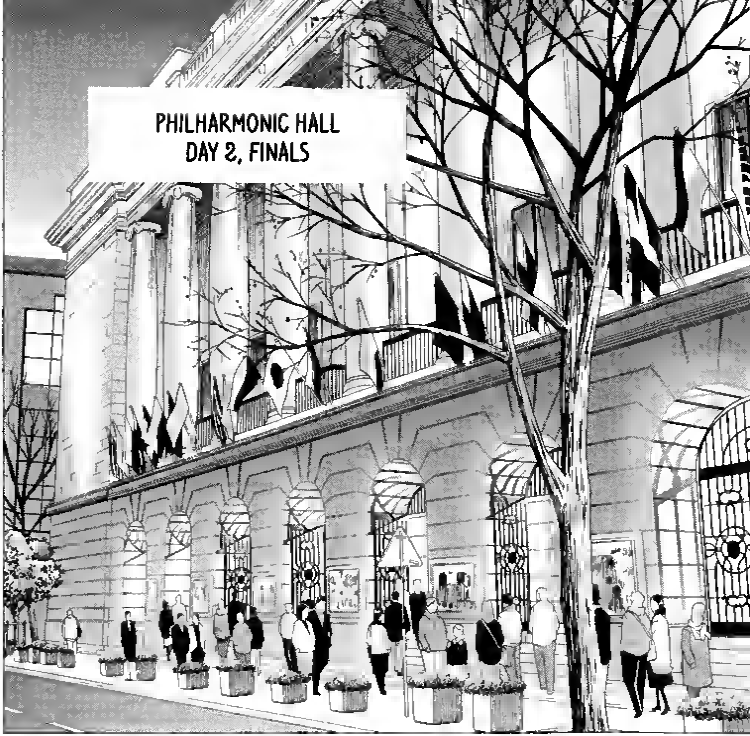
Kai was...
While I was getting tripped up by my own wayward thoughts, while I was stumbling around in circles...


Kai was actually shouldering such a heavy burden...

Has always lived while carrying problems that make my own worries seem so trivial.
Kai...

So terribly petty.
I'm so petty.
I will give everything I've got to help you!!
But pathetic as I am...
However...
Even with my help, everything may still be in vain.
ROLL

For Kai to win the competition...
But, even so...
Absolutely incredible!!
Kai's piano skills are incredible!
Hell might as well freeze over!


PHILHARMONIC HALL
DAY 2, FINALS

The chances of Ichinose winning?
Highly unlikely.

What?
What should he do to win?
ガヤ
ガヤ
Hmm, that's a tough question.
I mean, I can tell you all the reasons I don't think he can later, but...
That aside, Shuhei, did you sleep alright?
You look a bit out of it...
Oh, I slept.
...as well as I could, considering how excited I was...
I'll be watching the performance here from 6 to 9...
Then grab a quick dinner with Father afterwards...
I should be able to make it there by 10 to meet up with Kai!
ガヤ

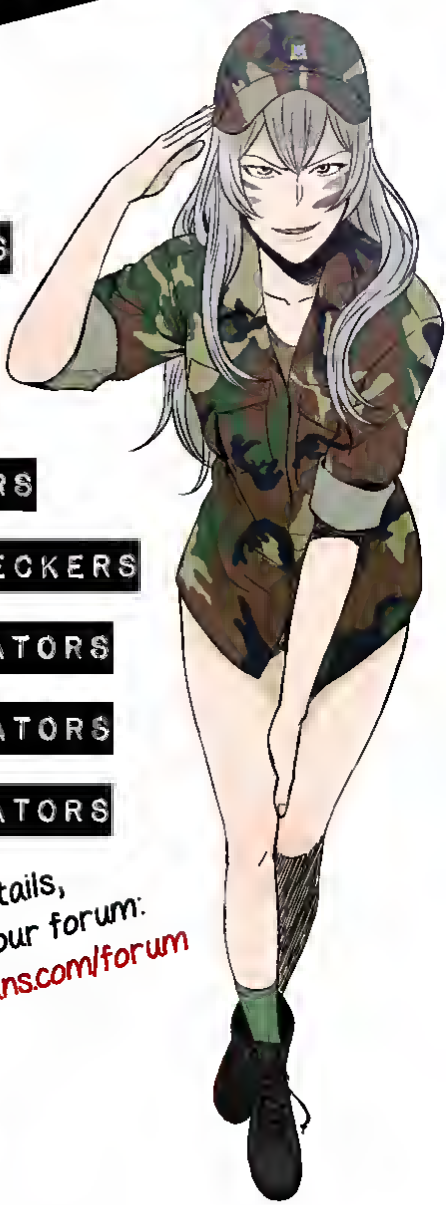
Good evening, everyone!
The performances on Day 2 of the Final round for the Chopin Competition... will now commence!

Don't fall asleep and miss it!
The first performer is one of the contenders for the first place!
Shuhei!
She will be playing Concerto No 2,
in F minor, Op 21
Ladies and gentleman, our first performer for today is
No 78, Olesha Yushchenko from Ukraine
First Movement, *Maestoso*
Second Movement, *Larghetto*

I have to listen well...
In any case...
Third Movement, Allegro vivace.
.....
Her piano of choice is Kawai.
To all the performances that could rival Kai's!
No. 78, Olesha Yuschenko.
キャ
Ukraine!
Musician Hand Doctor END

RECRUITING

EASY GOING SCANS



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Artwork from He is a High School Girl

Chapter 193

Piano Concerto No. 2

It's the second day of the competition... and the very first performance is by Olesha Yushchenko... Ukraine.
パチパチ
She and Karol Adamski dominated the crowds at the very beginning of the competition.
She's already active as a pianist here in Poland...

That she chose to play Concerto No. 2.
But the real reason I'm so intent on Yushchenko's performance is...
To let the Concerto No. 2...
She's the first contestant this time...

...re-
sound
in this
hall...
FIRST MOVEMENT,
MAESTOSO

The orchestral part is introduced by a chorus of strings...
And in turns foreshadows... the introduction of the piano solo later.
I gotta say...
Chopin really was a genius.
Shuhei...
What are the differences between Concertos No. 1 and No. 2?

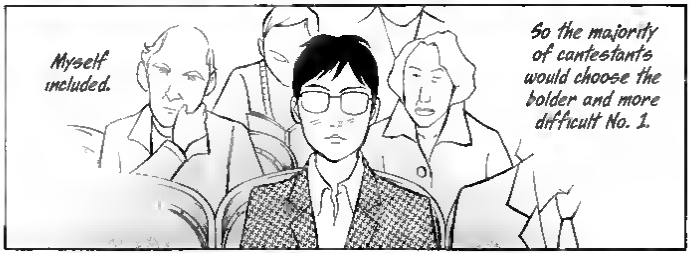
No. 1 is around 40 minutes.
But No. 2 is only around 30 minutes, that's 10 minutes shorter...

Well, to give the most simple answer: the length.

The orchestra in No. 1 is of a grander scale, which seems more fitting for a big piece.
Both are big pieces, but...

I had some trouble with it, at the very least.
The piano solo is also more technically challenging for No. 1...

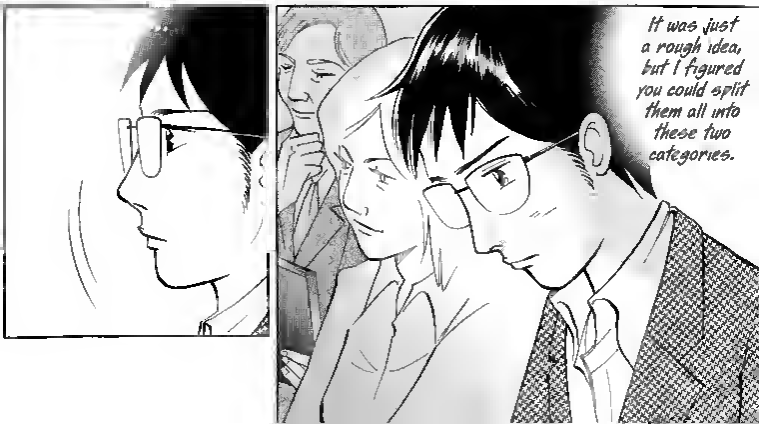
You've got to show off as much of your ability as you can in a limited amount of time...
Obviously, at a competition...


Myself included.
So the majority of contestants would choose the bolder and more difficult No. 1.

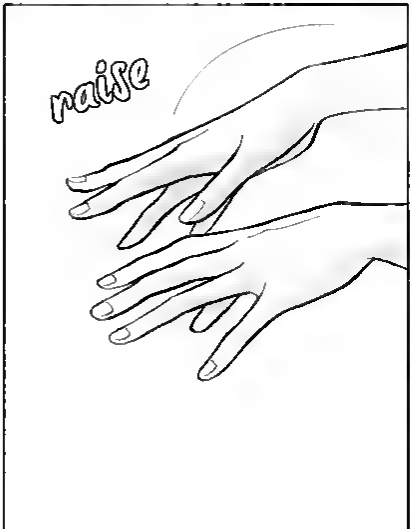
Mm-hmm.
...In that case, why might a person choose to perform No. 2?

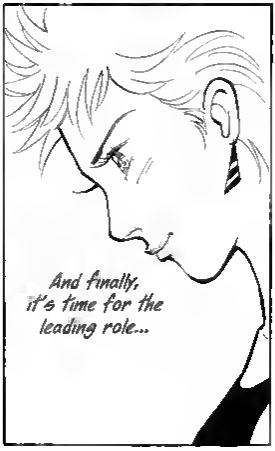
Taking into account that they probably just like No. 2 more, I'd say they could be categorized into two types...
Among those who choose No. 2 despite the apparent disadvantages...

That's some incredible self-confidence.
And the second being those who have confidence in their ability to surpass No. 1 with their No. 2.
The first being those who don't have confidence in their ability to play No. 1,


It was just a rough idea, but I figured you could split them all into these two categories.

The orchestra plays without the piano for just under 3 minutes...


raise


And finally, it's time for the leading role...

The piano,
to join in.

Of my two categories, Olesha Yushchenko...
one of the latter.
Is clearly...
That is a little rough.

It's true that, compared to No. 1,
No. 2 is shorter and technically simpler.
In other words, it is not a song that a child could play,
Even if the notes are played perfectly.
But precisely because it is so simple... that it requires a delicate touch and a lot of sensitivity to bring the piece to life...
One shouldn't choose to play No. 2 if their piano playing isn't mature enough.

Shuhei,
It's not just a matter of confidnece...
It's abaut the personality and individuality... that ane can present when playing No. 2!
He probably has a point.
Yushchenko's individuality shines through her No. 2.
Her touch is exquisite and beautiful...

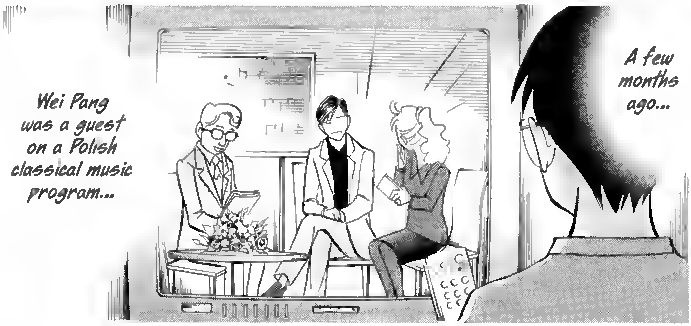
Splendid!
As expected, Yushchenko knows her way around this song.
Ohh♡ just like a sweet and mellow voice singing...
She plays such beautiful notes.
Her contact with the orchestra is just wonderful!
It's my edition after all...

SECOND MOVEMENT
LARGHETTO

Yushchenko's choice of playing No.2 is definitely...
...wise. Playing No. 2 is probably more advantageous than playing No. 1, which is very sound in structure and focuses on dramatic elements.

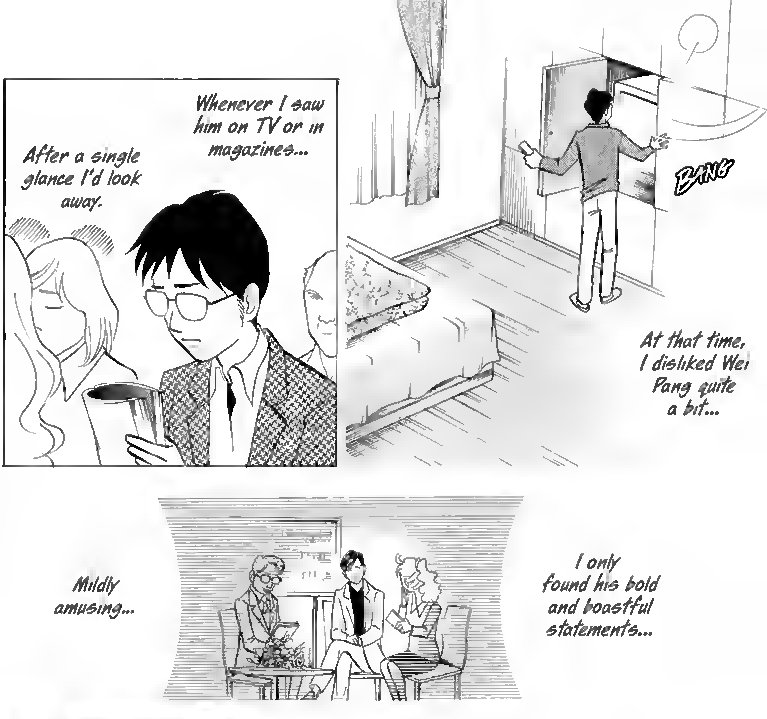
This is the movement of Chopin's ideal woman... Konstancja!
Ohh, such supple wrists...
キラリ

I think the reason Wei Pang chose to play No. 2 was to show off his skills.
Wei PANG
But as for Wei Pang...
But...
flip...


Wei Pang was a guest on a Polish classical music program...
A few months ago...

The reason no one has won this competition by playing No. 2
is not because the song itself is lacking. It's the skills of the players that were lacking

So then, Mr. Pang,
You're going for the first place?
Actually there have been winners who played it
Let's see There was 1 2, actually
Ah, my mistake! So there were
Haha... well, that would be nice
I hope to show the world that it's possible to win with either No. 1 or No. 2!
Beep
Wow! How wonderful ♡


Whenever I saw him on TV or in magazines...
After a single glance I'd look away.
BANG
At that time, I disliked Wei Pang quite a bit...

Mildly amusing...
I only found his bold and boastful statements...

To rank higher than Wei Pang.
Would be for Olesha Yushchenko... the popular pianist from Ukraine...
My wish...

THIRD MOVEMENT
ALLEGRO VIVACE

I don't think Wei Pang's playing will lose to Yushchenko's.
However...

I have a feeling it that won't stand up to the power of Wei Pang's.
Yushchenko's playing is so pristine and delicate...

No matter how much the crowd showers her with applause...
No matter how beautiful her No. 2...
SHIGEKI KAWAI

I think the tide of the crowd's favor will turn in his direction.
But even so, when it's Wei Pang's turn...
I've heard of her fame, but...
Having listened to her play myself, I must say she really is talented...
I don't think anyone can beat Wei Pang right now.
It's frustrating, but...
Wait...
No one...
There's absolutely no chance that he'd lose to anyone here.

Surpass Wei Pang's No. 2?!
Can Kai's No. 1...
Ba-dump
Ba-dump
Could Kai do it?!
Ka...
Beat Wei Pang...
Can Kai...
Huh?!
Ba-dump

Hm?
...wait...
That's... different from the gazette I got.
Really? I suppose there must be 2 editions.
Oh, it's just a gazette...
Come on, don't startle me like that.
I wasn't really reading it.
It's fine, you can have mine too.
I only glanced at mine, too.
Oh! The next pianist is coming!

"The Truth About Wei Pang"...
What?!
What kind of gazette is this?!
What...
Piano Concerto No. 2 END

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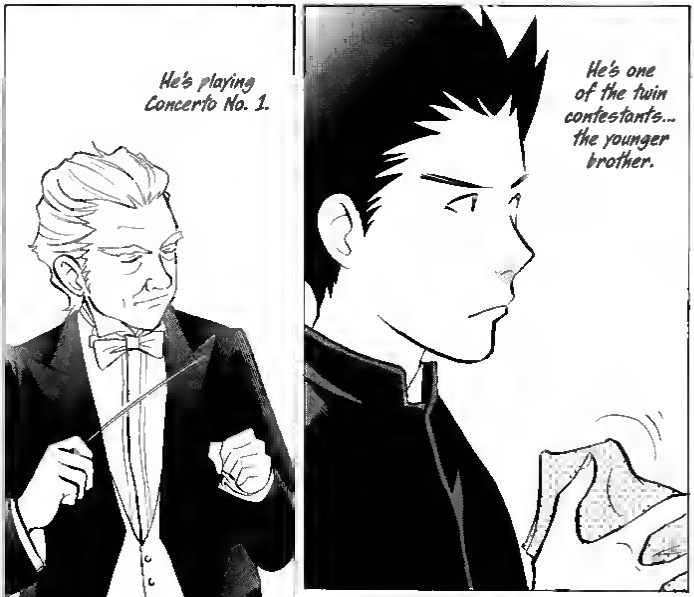
Artwork from the manhua "The Kensei's Calligraphy"

Chapter 194

The Truth About Wei Pang

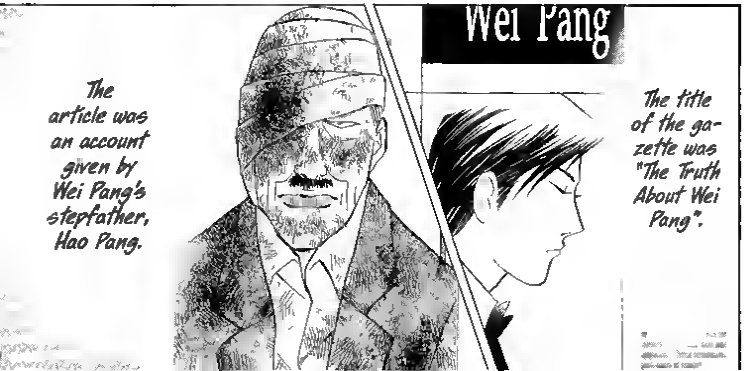
The Truth About Wei Pang

On the second day of the Finals...
The second performance was by Chang Woo An from South Korea.


He's one of the twin contestants... the younger brother.
He's playing Concerto No. 1.

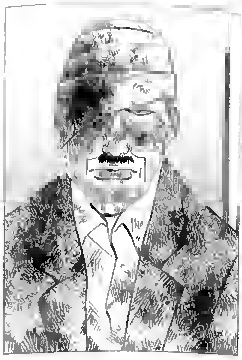
But it just sounded like BGM to me.
The orchestra has already started playing...

I couldn't tear my attention away from the gazette.
I...
The Truth About Wei Pang


Wei Pang
The article was an account given by Wei Pang's stepfather, Hao Pang.
The title of the gazette was "The Truth About Wei Pang".

A woman pregnant with a child whose father was unknown returned to her home village and was shunned by the villagers...

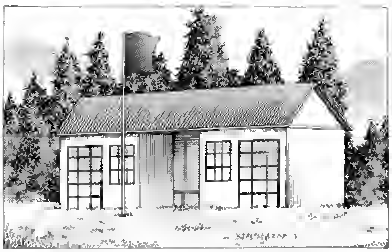
To sum up the article...



And grew up as a shunned member of the community.

...For better or worse, the child was taken out of the womb and saved by the villagers...

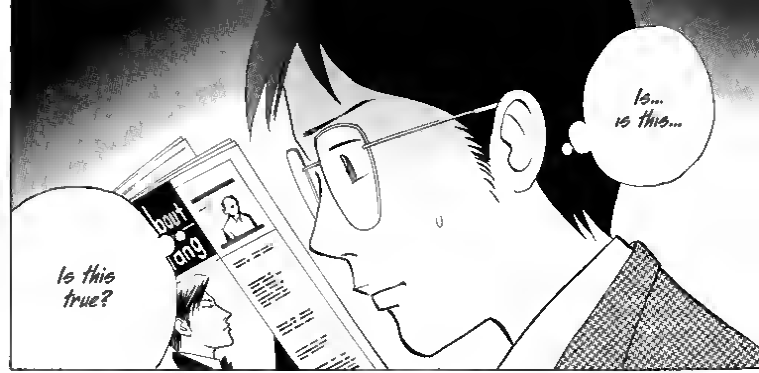
She committed suicide just as her waters broke.

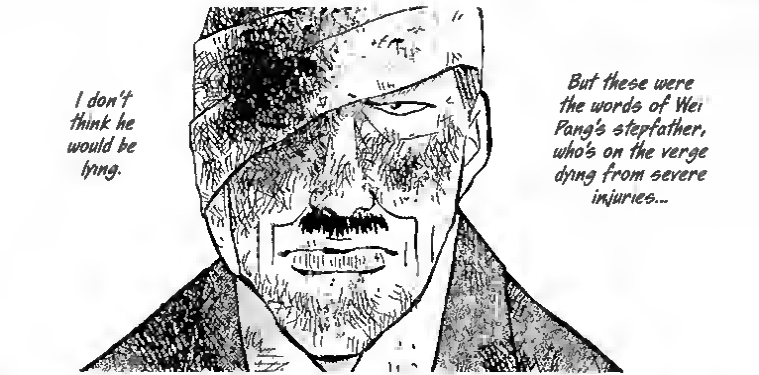


Hao Pang donated a piano and delivered it to the kindergarten in that village...

...A few years later,

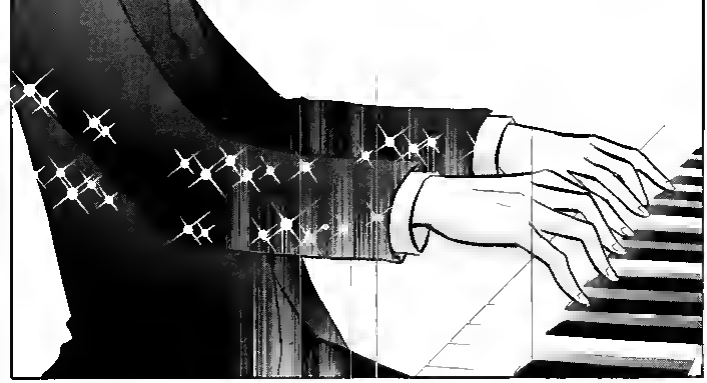
That was how Hao Pang met this boy.
The Truth About Wei Pang
At that time, a certain child caught his eye.
A child that could play a song improvised by the teacher in perfect recreation after hearing it just once.
And that's the boy who'd later become Wei Pang... This happened when he was 5 years old.
He bought the boy off the villagers for 100 yuan and became his stepfather.
*100 YUAN = APPROXIMATELY 1200 YEN
Was so shocking it sounded made-up...
The story of Wei Pang's origin contained in that article...
RUSHER
The Truth About Wei Pang


Is... is this...
Is this true?

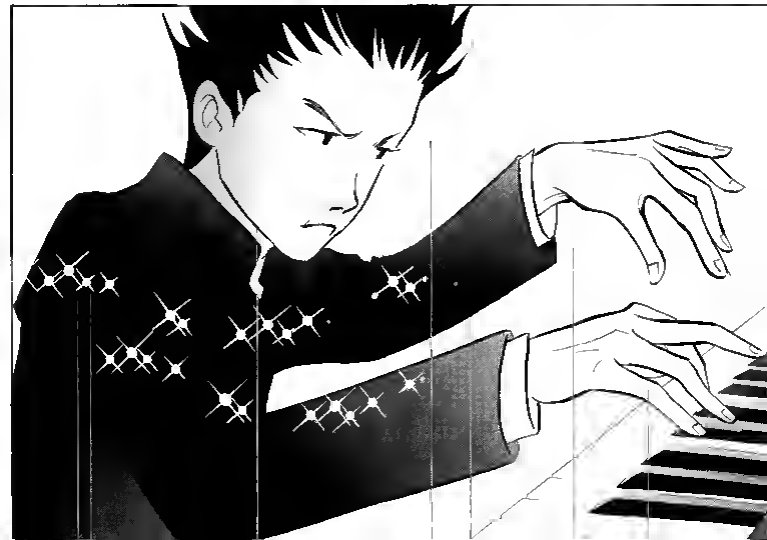

I don't think he would be lying.
But these were the words of Wei Pang's stepfather, who's on the verge dying from severe injuries...

They dimmed the lights?
Ugh... I can't read.

It's no use. I can't read it... and I'm not feeling too great either.
I want to read the rest... but it's too dark...
Ugh... what should I do?
I keep feeling worse and worse.
It's like I'm getting dragged deeper and deeper...
...into this darkness.
BAM

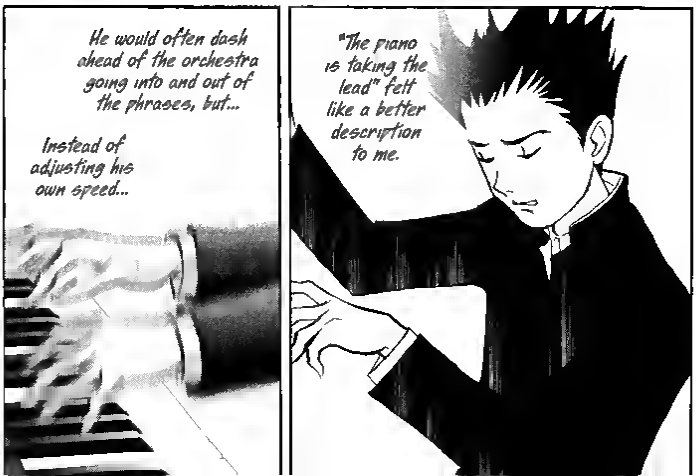


Was the piano solo played by An the younger.
What pulled me out of that darkness...



It was such an exciting introduction.
This isn't really in Chopin's style but...
It's... so bold...

Rather than "harmonizing with the orchestra"...
Self-confident... defiant... Those are words people use to describe An the younger...


He would often dash ahead of the orchestra going into and out of the phrases, but...
Instead of adjusting his own speed...
"The piano is taking the lead" felt like a better description to me.

Colt had no intention of losing...
GRIT
Of course.
He would shoot a look at the conductor, Antoni Colt...
CLAFF
As if in silent protest.

What is this?! What's with such provocative playing?!
How... How is he able to play the piano with such vigor?!

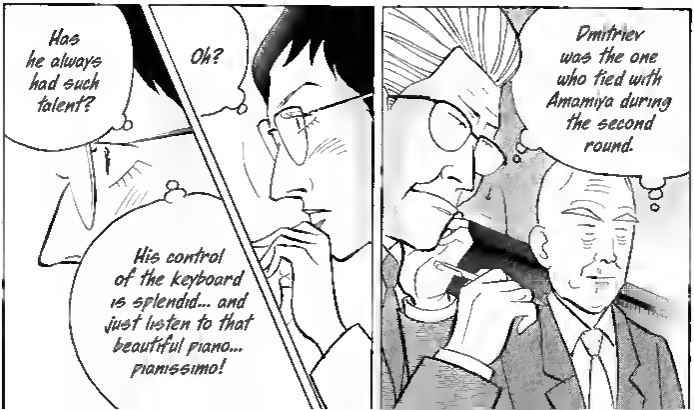
...grips my heart...
...That eccentric performance by An the younger...
Believe in your own music. Play your own music.
...who tried to hit Kai up, asking if he could go out with his elder brother, right?
What?
Well... um... he's a guy. Is that alright?
But... but this was the guy...
I like it even better than Ormesson's!!
To think that guy could play the piano like this.
I really enjoyed his No. 1.

That's true...
Hmm. He'll probably score higher than Ormesson.
As long as he can play the way he did during practice!
But...
I think Kai's No. 1 can definitely beat this!
So they're really using the demerit point system?
Aren't you going to come take a break? We have half an hour.
Don't need to use the restroom?
No, I'm okay...
No, I'll go later...

Hm?
Excuse me...
I have to read the rest of this article. This is no time to take a break...
Uh... I think it's where the gazettes are usually distributed...
Gazeta
That gazette... Where did you get it?
Thanks, I'll go see!
Huh? But I didn't see any there...

Time stopped.
...And when I suddenly saw the name "Sousuke Ajino" in the article...
Sousuke Ajino
For some reason, I started reading it more secretively...
...Imitating Ajino Sousuke?!!
Ever since the age of five, Wei Pang has been...

THIRD PERFORMER
NO. 22 EVGENII DMITRIEV
(RUSSIA)
CONCERTO NO. 1 IN E MINOR, OP. 11


Has he always had such talent?
Oh?
His control of the keyboard is splendid... and just listen to that beautiful piano... pianissimo!
Dmitriev was the one who tied with Amamiya during the second round.

He is a fine pianist.
Incredible! I wonder if he was just out of sorts during the 2nd round...
It was indeed the right choice... to rank him higher than Shuhei.
Indeed...
But Shuhei Amamiya will someday surpass him.
I'm sure of it...!

Dmitriev was amazing!!
And handsome ♡
I guess the piano really is Russia's specialty

Kyahaha...
Humph...
Yushchenko's also a Russian from Ukraine, right?
She's just born there.
Ah, that's true.
I guess it's about time for a new age of Russian dominance.
Oh yes, just like old times.

I guess I should have known all the restaurants close by would be full of people coming back from the competition. There goes our peaceful evening meal.
Those ladies sure are chatty.
They're excited. Can't settle down... That's all.
The gazette about Wei Pang...
The Truth About Wei Pang

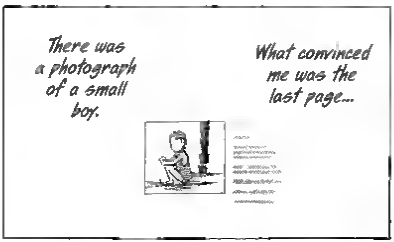
Have read that article...?
I wonder how many people...
I wonder...
His stepfather Hao Pang would procure Ajino-sensei's CDs and videos for him... no matter the cost...
Wei Pang has been copying Ajino-sensei since he was 5 years old.
It was said that he had even bought things from their owners at 100 times the original price.
He bought up anything and everything that had to do with sensei and gave them to Wei Pang.

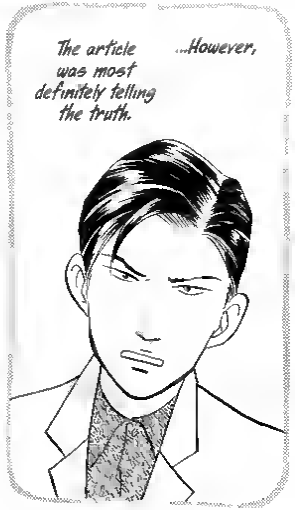
Anyway, about why Ichinose can't win...
There's nothing wrong with my appetite, but...
Oh, no I'm alright!
Huh?
What's the matter, Shuhei? Not hungry?
No one here understands Japanese.
No problem.
Father, let's not start that here.
We don't know who might be listening...
First of all...
I'm not in the mood for debating.
I'm meeting up with Kai after this...
I can raise any number of arguments to refute Father's points, but...
Guess I'll just let him talk.

Why would the organizer...
...distribute such an article?
Wei Pang
Why...
Thanks for the meal.
See you tomorrow!
146
At the very least...
Wei Pang probably wouldn't want people to find out about that.
Who's that?
A Japanese?
Ajino Sousuke?!!

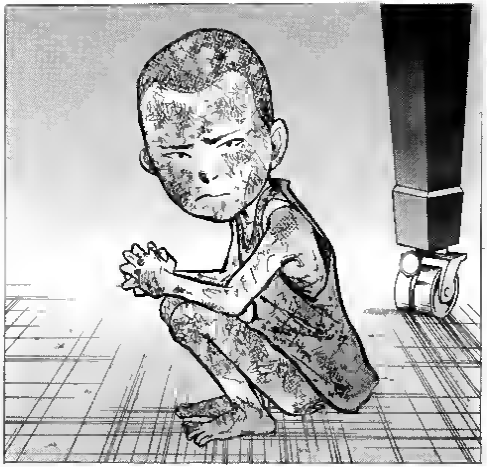
I pray...
That he won't see this article, at least not until after he's played his piece for the Finals.

Are you saying that I imitated that Japanese?
We are alike?


There was a photograph of a small boy.
What convinced me the last page...


...However,
The article was most definitely telling the truth.

That boy...



The Truth About Wei Pang END

Artwork from "Song of the Long March"

Chapter 195

Gossip and Resolve

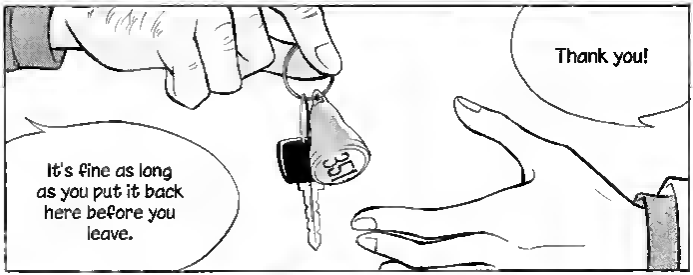
I've been blessed, ever since I was born.

Click

Having learned about Wei Pang's childhood...

I realized it was only natural that Pang would feel antagonistic towards...
A spoiled rich boy like me.
Of course, there are still things that are out of my reach...
But I'm blessed with my parents and the environment I was brought up in.
And all sorts of worries...

CHOPIN ACADEMY
(THE FRYDERYK CHOPIN UNIVERSITY OF MUSIC)
I have absolutely no right to complain.
UNIWERSYTET MUZYCZNY
CHOPINA


Thank you!
It's fine as long as you put it back here before you leave.

Except for Kai...
Beep
Beep

I'm also surrounded by friends who grew up in well-off families,

Kai is special.
Ah! Kai? I just got here.
Where are you?
Yeah, I've booked Room 351, so when you come over...
Yeah... the one from yesterday...
Between Pang and Kai... I wonder which of them has it worse?
Beep
I've never met, nor do I think I will ever meet again, a person with such unique circumstances as Kai.
Wet Paint
Huh?!

Huh... So there's a copy of the gazette about Pang even here...
Nothing good will come of anyone reading this.
Especially Kai...
If it was enough to leave me so shaken, I can't imagine how Kai would react...
I... need to make sure this doesn't get out...
At least not until the finale are over.

That was quick!
Ah, Kai!
Yeah, I was close by!
Ahhh...

Actually, are you sure you're alright for tonight Amamiya?
A...Absolutely!
...Actually, this is my top priority.
Have you read it?
Ah, yeah.
There were some downstairs, so I grabbed one when I came in and read it.
That...
That gazette...
I had to look up some of the English words, so it took a while...
I actually just finished reading it.
The gazette was written in two languages, Polish and English.
It's a pretty depressing article.
Indeed.

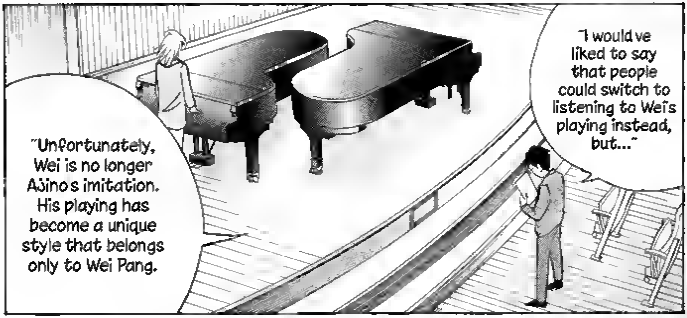
But I've always figured that he's copying Ajino-sensei.
Well... To be honest, I'd be surprised if he weren't.

Starting from here!
This paragraph right here really pisses me off.

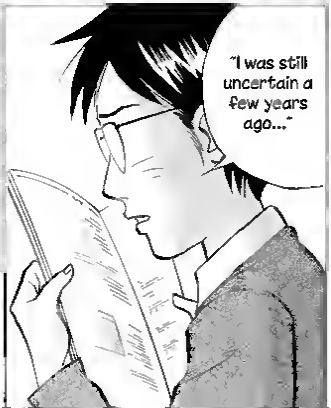
Well, that's fine, he's free to copy whomever he likes, but...
flip
This is the part that gets to me!

Huh? Which part?

Um...
"Sousuke Aijino's career as a pianist has long since been over..."
"He could never perform live again... Not ever."


"I would've liked to say that people could switch to listening to Wei's playing instead, but..."
"Unfortunately, Wei is no longer Aijino's imitation. His playing has become a unique style that belongs only to Wei Pang.

"But now, he has improved time and time again by devouring Aijino's style. The day Wei's playing sweeps across the world will soon be here."


"I was still uncertain a few years ago..."

"Though I, his father, might not live to see that day... I ask the people of the world to bear witness in my stead."
This part?
The Truth About Wei Pang
Saying he... "devoured" Aijino's style.
Talking like Aijino's already dead...
Like he's already gone...
I was too shocked by the rest of the article to pay much attention to this particular part...
Ah...
I read it twice... just to make sure I wasn't getting it wrong.
I was so upset...

Well... To be honest, I was worried you'd start feeling sympathetic towards Pang... that you might lose your will to compete with him...
Especially when it's right before your final performance...
Is there some good side to this?
But I'm actually a little relieved!
I... see.
Come to think of it, Kai's life hasn't exactly been easy either...
Why would I feel sorry for Pang?
He's the king of the piano world.
Or... the prince, I guess.
A silent resolve building in Kai!!
I can see...
It will tell the world that "Ajino Sousuke is here!" ...He'll be reborn through his student!!
Plus, if Kai is able to win, as Ajino-sensei's only disciple...
Ah...

Well anyway, you're in luck, Kai!
What do you mean?

Why?
That's what I mean when I say luck's on your side!
Pang will be playing Concerto No. 2 this time!

They released a CD, but you can't understand just from listening to that... The... live performance was...
A year ago... when I was in France, I watched Pang play No. 1 with the Orchestre National de Paris.
It made me tremble from head to toe.

To be honest... You can't beat that with what you've got right now, Kai!
No... I think even the current masters of the piano... couldn't top that.
I don't think even Pang himself could beat the No. 1 he played that day!!
I haven't heard Pang's No. 2 yet but...
You're aiming to win, aren't you?!
It... It makes a huge difference!
Come on. No. 1, No. 2, it doesn't really make that much of a difference...

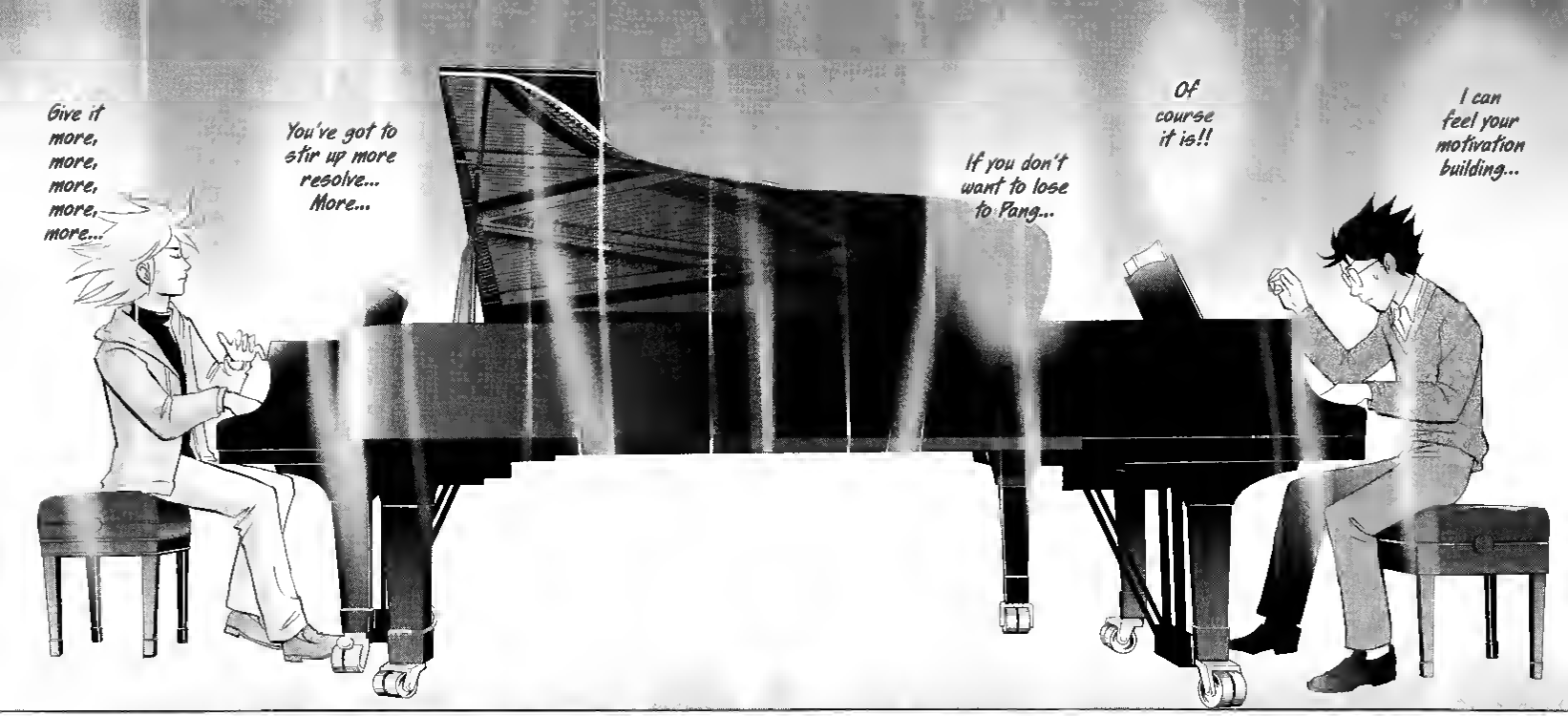
So it matters a lot whether Pang, the likeliest winner, will play No. 1 or No. 2...
It's the key of making the impossible possible!!

You told me to "forget all about it"... didn't you?
Winning isn't something I can do just by "aiming" for it...

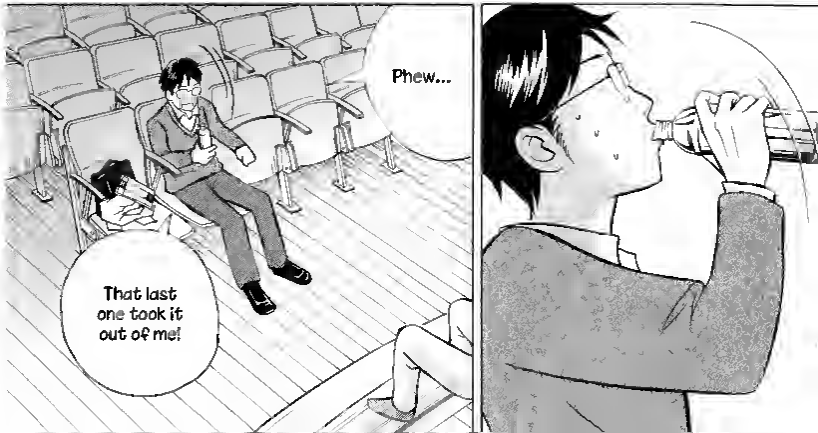
What?

Ah, I'm sorry, I'm sorry.
That... That's right! Sorry, I got all caught up in this...
Anyway, let's forget all about that and just practice!

His playing...
Is even more fired up...
Than last night.
I can feel...
Kai's resolve.


Give it more, more, more, more, more...
You've got to stir up more resolve... More...
If you don't want to lose to Pang...
Of course it is!!
I can feel your motivation building...

Yeah! It's the same song, but it felt so different I actually got excited seeing where it would go!
Huh?
I was?
You keep flying all over the place, so it was super tough keeping up, but super fun too!
That was fun!


That last one took it out of me!
Phew...

To rein in the 2nd piano (the orchestral part)...
I kept thinking Kai would find it too easy...
But he's probably right.
Seriously? I was?
I'm exhausted!
Eh- hhhh? No waaay...
I wonder if Ajino-sensei will see it?
Sorry to turn the conversation back to this article, but...
The truth about Wei Pang
In the end... I'm the only one who got shaken up by the article about Pang.
What? You really think he'd let sensei see it after reading it?
Grandpa Jeon has probably brought one home with him...
Yeah... I think he will...

Yeah.
Sooner or later.
Sousuke, Sousuke.
Sorry, but could you come down to the lobby?

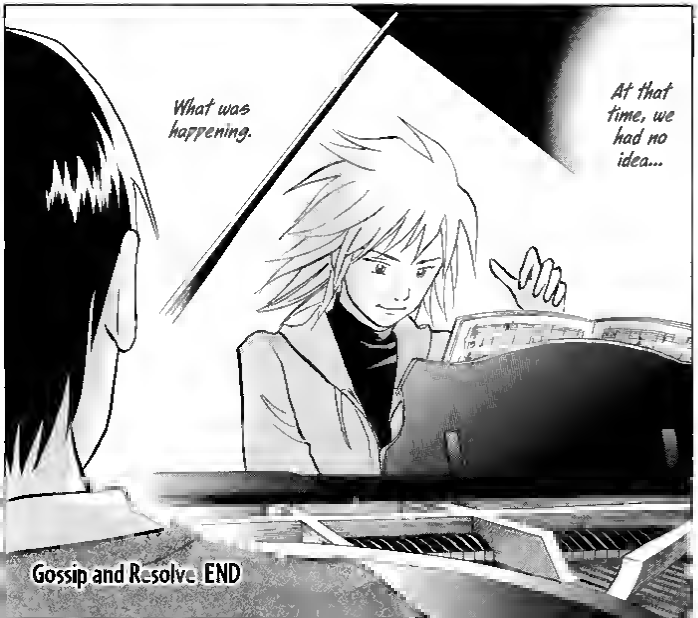
You have to read this, Sousuke!
It's this!
?
What's the matter, Jean?
Didn't you say we should get to bed early tonight? I even got back to my room early...

Im gonna file a complaint to the organizer about this!
This is a violation of a contestant's privacy!
Yes, yes. Just read it.
It's a gazette from the venue.
"The Truth About Wei Pang"...

Well, I'll take a look.
Victoria!
Of course they are! I wrote it so people would read it...
Someone's reading the article over there too.

Some of his teachers and acquaintances...
Agreed to an interview on the condition that it won't be leaked in Japan...
Forget about Mr. Pang! That's already a huge success.
Our next problem is Kai Ichinose.
They answered our questions pleasantly enough, but...
None of it would make a good article.
We haven't even managed to find his parents or where he lives!
The Tsuchi Times
Kai Ichinose
What I want is some good gossip!
We've got everything ready and waiting, but for what?

Hello, this is Victoria.
Buzzzz Buzzzz
Seriously, Victoria... Let's stop this!
I have a really bad feeling about the whole thing.
tap tap
Japanese Mafia...?
Huh? What?
Youtube...?!
What...
What is this...?



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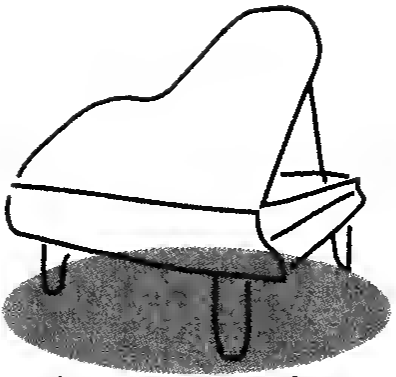

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To be continued in Volume 22

下田コラム
SHIMODA COLUMN

Chopin's Piano Concertos

BY SHIMODA KOUJI (MUSIC CRITIC AND PIANIST)

The majority of composers known to the world today have composed a piano concerto. Due to the magnificence and grandiose in scale, piano concertos allow composers to showcase their composing abilities as well as their techniques as pianists, especially during the era in which composers were also the performers of their own pieces.

Around 1829-1830, the young Chopin, barely 20 and burning with ambition, started composing his own piano concerto. He first completed the Piano Concerto in F Minor, followed by the Piano Concerto in E Minor. Both pieces are illustrious in terms of both piano technicalities and musicality. They are also brimming with elements of Polish music, which is one of the most enchanting features of his compositions.

Another charming point of his concertos is, of course, their vivid elements of romanticism – their intention of preserving his reminiscence of one particular woman.

"I have... found my ideal... of whom I dream every night, she who was in my mind when I composed the adagio of my concerto."

This "ideal" refers to Chopin's fellow student at the Warsaw Conservatory who studied vocals, Konstancja Gładkowska, and the "adagio" is the Second Movement of the Concerto in F Minor, *Larghetto*. The entire piece overflowed with romantic sensuality, which also inspired the subsequent Concerto in E Minor.

Chopin performed the Concerto in F Minor for the first time in Warsaw on March 17th, 1830, and the Concerto in E Minor on October 11th, 1830. Then why did the F Minor, both composed and performed before the E Minor, become Concerto No. 2, while the E Minor ended up as Concerto No. 1? This was because, in Chopin's words, "Back when it was about to be published, I lost the orchestral parts to my F Minor Concerto, so I submitted the E Minor instead."

Now then, let me give a brief introduction on these two piano concertos.

● Piano Concerto No. 1 in E Minor, Op. 11

Composed in 1830. Published in 1833. Dedicated to famous pianist Freidrich Kalkbrenner.

First Movement *Allegro Maestoso*

E Minor　3/4 Time　Sonata Allegro Form

A magnificent musical movement. The entrance of the piano after the orchestra's introduction is very dramatic. In the first theme, the influences of the Mazurka and the Polonaise can be heard, and the 2nd theme is very romantic. There are many difficult passages and interwoven accents, making it a challenge to play.

Second Movement *Romanze – Larghetto*

E Major　4/4 Time　Romanze Form

"... it is rather a Romance, calm and melancholy, giving the impression of someone looking gently towards a spot that calls to mind a thousand happy memories. It is a kind of reverie in the moonlight on a beautiful spring evening." Chopin spoken often of this movement in his letters.

Third Movement *Rondo – Vivace*

E Major　2/4 Time　Rondo Form

In Poland there was a popular folk dance performed by holding hands and moving with a sideway jump-step known as the Krakowiak. The Krakowiak rondo theme is very vivid, and the pentatonic scale extremely joyous. The episode that runs between the two sections is also splendid.

● Piano Concerto No. 2 in F Minor, Op. 21

Composed in 1829~30. Published in 1836. Dedicated to the Countess Delfina Potocka, one of his patrons.

First Movement *Maestoso*

F Minor　4/4 Time　Sonata Allegro Form

The most memorable part is the delicate first theme and the modest second theme. After the piano joins in the exposition, it plays an additional nocturne-esque episode that is not present in the orchestral part, forming an extremely charming and tender passage. This section perfectly illustrates why Chopin is hailed as the "Poet of the Piano".

Second Movement *Larghetto*

A Flat Major　4/4 Time　Ternary Form

The adagio of Chopin's "ideal". The rapid rising and falling of the notes sound just like Konstancja's beautiful singing voice. The middle section, which heats up with a unison, is also quite splendid.

Third Movement *Allegro Vivace*

F Minor　3/4 Time　Rondo Form

The melodic idea seems to spin around right from the very beginning. Influences of the Mazurka are apparent in the rondo theme and the scherzando in the middle section. The magnificent passage weaves itself freely in the midst of the two themes.

―ガキの頃から―

gaki no koro kara

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collected short stories of Makoto Isshiki

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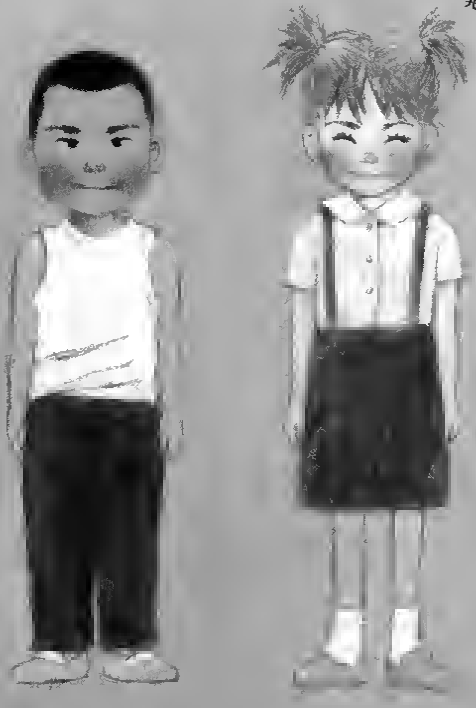

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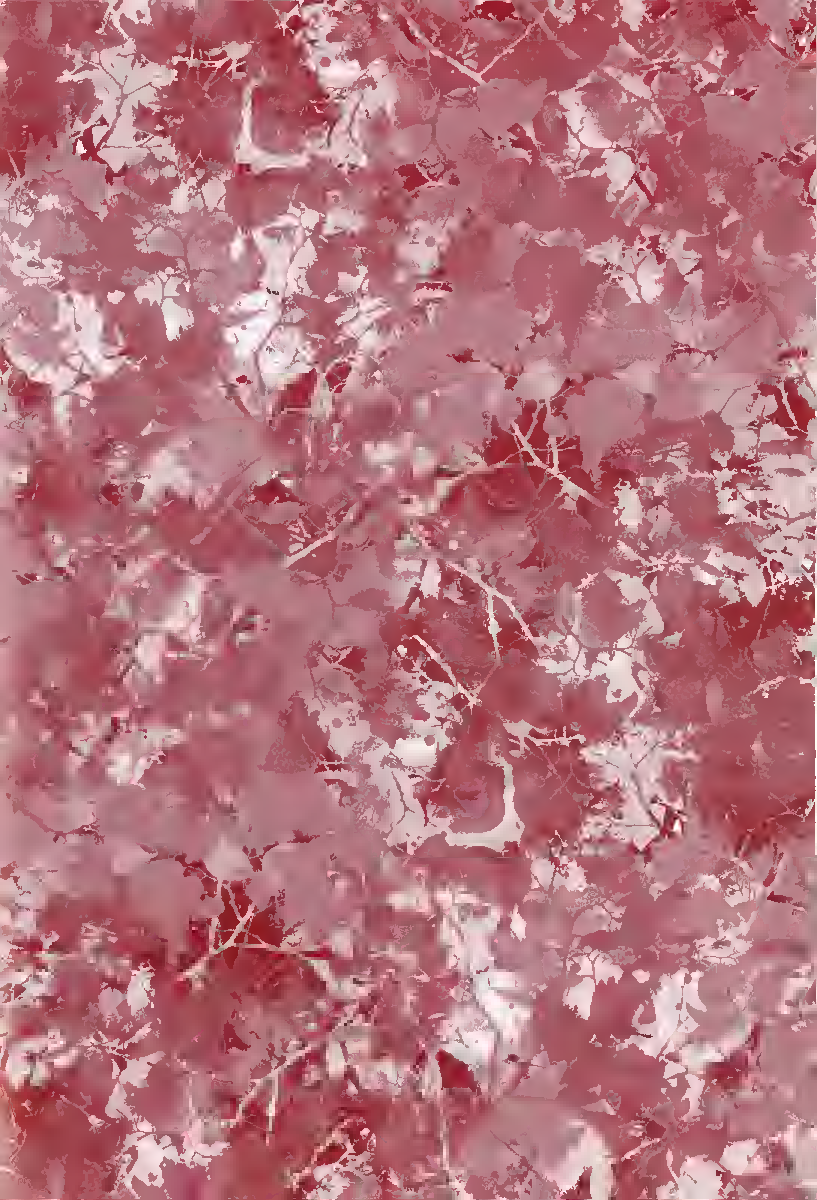

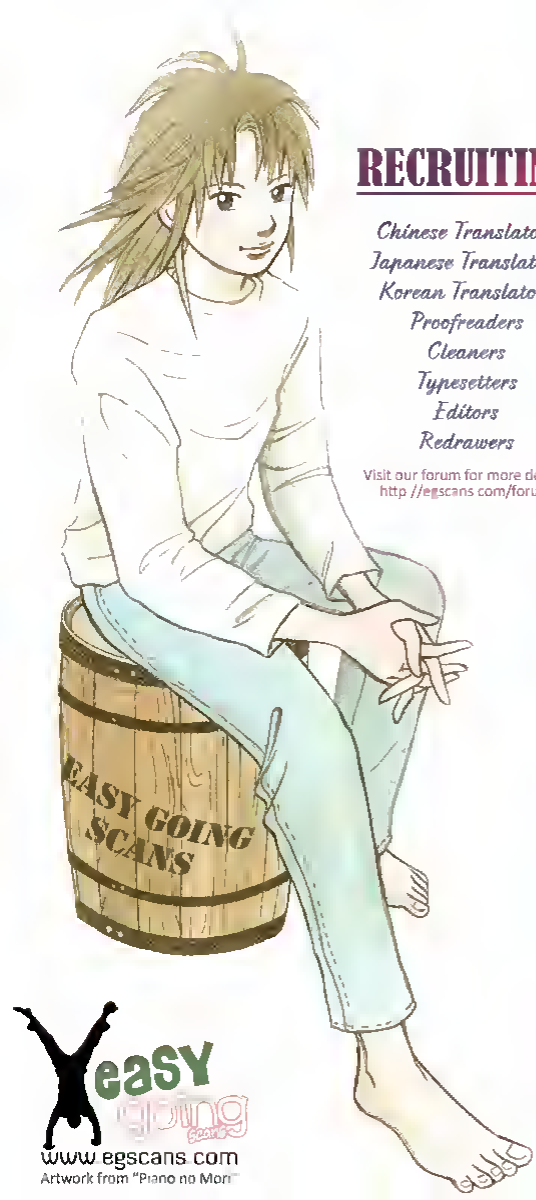

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